

Oral Testimony of Leonard S. Greenberger
Before the D.C. Council Committee on Health
February 17, 2017

Chairman Gray, other members of the Committee on Health, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on this important issue.

My name is Leonard Greenberger and I am a 28-year resident of the District of Columbia, a partner at a PR agency that has operated at various locations in D.C. over the course of its 35-year history, and an active supporter of the People for Fairness Coalition's Public Restroom Initiative.

I am also an avid runner, and on numerous occasions during both training runs and races I have found myself with an urgent need to use a restroom. Typically, I try to stick to routes and local running paths that offer public restrooms so that I know I'm never far from one should nature suddenly call. But sometimes that call is so urgent that I have to run much quicker than I'd like, or I need to quickly find accommodations in an area I don't know well.

My most vivid memory of the 2005 Marine Corps Marathon is not the booming cannon shot that signals the start of the race nor the satisfaction that comes with completing the race at the Iwo Jima Memorial. Rather, it was the moment when the need hit me far from one of the races' dedicated comfort stations. I began to panic when I realized I wasn't going to make it to the next station, and that I was surrounded by other runners along Ohio Drive where not even bushes were available to conceal what I might have to do.

It was then that I glimpsed the FDR Memorial and remembered from the times that I had taken my kids to see it that the memorial offered public restrooms. You'll all be happy to know – and I was relieved, if

you'll excuse the pun – that I managed to get to those restrooms just in time, do my business, and continue the race.

I was lucky in that instance, but I have learned from my work with the PFFC that many people have not been as fortunate and must live with the constant knowledge that public restroom facilities are far too rare in the nation's capital.

It is for all of these reasons that I appear before you today to speak in favor of Public Restroom Facilities Task Force Bill 22-61 which has been referred to the Committee on Health. One of the responsibilities of the Task Force will be to provide a set of comprehensive policy recommendations on how the District can increase the availability of public restroom facilities or private restroom facilities open to the public.

Access to public restrooms is a human right and denying access is not only a denial of one's rights but also an affront to human dignity. Those who live in and visit our nation's capital, and in particular families with young children, pregnant women, the elderly, those in need of permanent housing, runners like myself, and others who are in any way "restroom challenged," deserve access to clean, publicly available toilet facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The initiative's goals will also help the city's business community by making our streets and sidewalks cleaner and safer.

I believe that as one of the country's foremost tourist destinations, Washington, D.C. should set an example for the rest of the city and indeed the rest of the world in this regard.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on this important issue. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.