

**Testimony of Beth Merricks
at the January 10, 2018 Hearing on
Bill 22-0223: Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act of 2017**

Councilmember Cheh, members of the Committee on Transportation & Environment,

My name is Gerald Schwinn. Beth Merricks has asked me to read her testimony since she is out of town. Like Beth, am a resident of Ward 2 and live near Dupont Circle. Beth has asked that I clarify that she is testifying today as a Public Witness and not as an official representative of the Dupont Circle Village.

My name is Beth Merricks. I am a resident of Ward 2 and live near Dupont Circle. I am testifying as a senior, an active bicyclist and walker, and someone who believes that everyone should have ready access to clean, safe, public restrooms. Accordingly, I support Bill 22-0223, the Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act of 2017.

My name is Beth Merricks. I am a resident of Ward 2 and live near Dupont Circle. I am testifying as a senior, an active bicyclist and walker, and someone who believes that everyone should have ready access to clean, safe, public restrooms. Accordingly, I support Bill 22-0223, the Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act of 2017.

I am an active member of the Dupont Circle Village (DCV), a nonprofit organization that connects members to one another, provides information, cultural and social activities, services, and supports. Membership enables Villagers to maintain their health and homes as they embrace the benefits and challenges of aging. The DCV has over 200 members between the ages of 50 and 90. I feel proud to say that in the Spring of 2017 the DCV formally endorsed--through the PFFC Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative--clean, safe, public restrooms for needed areas in Washington, D.C.

I recently found out that when Age Friendly D.C., an Initiative that operates out of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, conducted a survey of D.C. residents 50 years and older, they found that the two amenities that seniors most wanted when they visited downtown DC were a restroom and a bench to sit on.

I am also a member of several local bicycling organizations including the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA)--which also endorsed PFFC's Initiative.

I first learned about PFFC's Downtown D.C. Public Restroom Initiative two years ago when I read a letter to the editor in the Northwest Current. After signing their petition, I contacted a member of the Initiative and subsequently attended one of their weekly

meetings. I have been following their work since. I was delighted when a Bill was introduced, inspired by their Initiative and based on lessons learned and best practices that they have identified, to do something about our lack of public restrooms in the District.

My friends will tell you that I have been an advocate of clean, safe, public restrooms for many years. As bicyclists and walkers, my friends and I spend a considerable amount of time outside. It is important for us to be able to find clean, safe, readily available restrooms when the need arises. Since there are very few public restrooms in D.C. and there are no signs to tell us where they are, we stop at restaurants or stores and ask to use their restrooms. Sometimes we are allowed to do so but the expectation is that we will purchase something, even if we don't want or need anything except to use their restrooms. This is not ideal for us, especially if we need to make multiple restroom stops, which is usually the case during a two or three hour outing.

I would like to add that I have traveled to many other U.S. and foreign cities. As a tourist, I find cities with clean, safe, readily available public restrooms to be much more welcoming and sanitary than those without them. It is embarrassing to me that the capital of the United States--one of the richest countries in the world--cannot provide for the basic restroom needs of its citizens and visitors.

In closing, I urge the Committee on Transportation and Environment to pass Bill 22-0223 and make it into law. Ready access to clean, safe restrooms is a need shared by all of us.

Thank you.