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Hearing on the Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act
Committee on Transportation and Environment
John A. Wilson Building
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Thank you Chairwoman Cheh and members of this committee for the opportunity to testify today, and thank you Councilmember Nadeau for your leadership in this critical legislation. My name is Jessica Raven, and I am a resident of Ward 5 and the Executive Director of Collective Action for Safe Spaces, which is a local grassroots nonprofit working to make DC's public spaces safer for everyone. I am here to express support for the Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act of 2017 because access to basic resources is an important part of feeling safe. By incentivizing businesses to make their restrooms available to the public, this legislation builds on existing resources in the community to ensure access to a basic human right that is often denied to DC's most vulnerable residents.

As someone who has experienced homelessness, and in that experience faced many challenges in accessing my basic necessities, this legislation is close to my heart. Housing is a human right, and so is access to clean water and sanitation. It's our responsibility as a community to ensure that those in our city experiencing homelessness at the very least have regular access to restrooms, as we work toward the larger goal of ending homelessness.

With the closure of the MLK Library, the need is greater than ever for increased services and support for those living in our city without housing.

[Research by the People for Fairness Coalition](#) showed that there are only three public restrooms available for use by non-paying customers in the busy downtown DC area: Union Station, Lincoln Memorial, and Jefferson Memorial. Even on Metro, it is up to the discretion of individual station managers to allow people to use station restrooms, which are primarily only open to transit riders who are people with disabilities, elderly people, and families with children. So often, people who are perceived as homeless are denied access to public restrooms, and because housing status isn't currently a protected trait under the D.C. Human Rights Act, people who experience discrimination because of their real or perceived homelessness status have no recourse for accessing justice in these incidents.

Without investing in public restroom access, DC continues to spend money on criminalizing people who are homeless and cleaning up waste.

People who urinate in public spaces can be ticketed or arrested for public urination or even indecent exposure — even though many of them literally have nowhere else to go. Similar to the problem faced by trans people who are harassed or restricted from using bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity, this problem is rooted in the denial of access to public spaces to marginalized communities.

The solution to this problem isn't arrest; it's access. I urge the DC Council to pass this legislation and increase access to public restrooms for those who need it most. Thank you.