

**Testimony of Marc Friend**  
**Department of Human Services Oversight Hearing**  
**April 9, 2019**

Committee on Health Chair Gray, members of the Committee on Health, Department of Health Director Dr. Nesbitt, my name is Marc Friend and I live in Kingman Park where my wife and I own our house. I am here to urge the inclusion of \$336,000 in the FY 2020 budget to finance the first year of two public restroom pilots provided for under Act 22-0608, Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act of 2018.

It was two days before my wedding that I awoke from my colonoscopy to my doctor informing that I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Little did I know how much that moment was going to impact me these past two and a half years. For the past two and a half years, I have learned what it means to have a chronic illness.

One of the toughest challenges of an inflammatory bowel disease is one's need for a restroom quickly and without warning. Recently, I had just enjoyed a lovely birthday dinner for a friend in Chinatown when I was walking towards the bus stop and that terrible sensation came, I needed a bathroom urgently. I looked around, the Portrait Gallery was closed and most restaurants were closed. I dashed multiple blocks frantically looking for someplace easily accessible. Unfortunately, my options were very limited and I did not make it. What started as a wonderful evening, turned into a mess.

I have been very lucky to travel throughout the world and most capitals from Bangkok to London have clean and safe public restrooms for anyone to access. Yet, here in the greatest city in the world, my home, it is nearly impossible to find anything.

Now, often, as a white male, no one questions me when I walk into a restaurant or coffee shop and go straight to the restroom, but for many of my fellow D.C. residents including residents of color, those experiencing homelessness, visitors from other countries, this is often not the case.

Act 22-0608, Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act of 2018 (formerly Bill 22-0223), was influenced by the significant research carried out by the People for Fairness Coalition (PFFC) Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative.

The Act calls for forming an Interagency Working Group that will study the feasibility of and recommending two public restrooms pilots. For this to happen, the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget must include \$336,000 for the first year of the pilots. I was very disappointed that Mayor Bowser did not include this funding in her budget request. I urge the council to lead on this issue and include \$336,000 in the FY 2020 budget to finance the first year of the public restroom pilots. Thank you very much.