

Testimony of Marcia Bernbaum
Mentor & Advisor to the PFFC Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative
at February 15, 2019 Department of Public Works Oversight Hearing

Committee Chair Cheh, members of the Committee on Transportation & Environment,
Department of Public Works Acting Director Geldart,

My name is Marcia Bernbaum. I serve as Mentor & Advisor to the People for Fairness (PFFC)
Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative.

I am here today to thank you Committee Chair Cheh, as without your support Bill 22-223,
Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act of 2018, would never have made it to
the Council floor where it was passed by unanimous voice votes on December 4 and 18, 2018.
You and your staff wisely rewrote the Bill to convert it into two pilots, a move that we heartily
support. You also added provisions for tracking the pilots (number of police reports at near the
public restroom sites, costs to maintain) to be used as a basis for deciding whether or not to
continue/expand the pilots which we thought was an excellent idea.

We believe that Bill 22-0223 is currently with the US Congress and that, upon its return, Mayor
Bowser will sign it into law. We are hoping that the \$336,000 required to fund the first year of
the two public restroom pilots will be included in the Mayor's FY 2020 Budget as, absent this
funding, the Working Group will not be able to begin its work.

Assuming that the \$336,000 in funding required for the first year of the pilots is included in the
Mayor's FY 2020 Budget and that the pilots are carried out, this will be the first city in the US
that will have done such careful tracking. DC's example piloting a program to provide
incentives to businesses to open their restroom to the public could serve as a model for other
cities in the US desiring to increase their supply of clean, safe public restrooms.

I will not go over the provisions of Bill 22-0223 as you know them well. What I would like to do
today instead is go over the lessons learned and best practices taken from our research
focusing on cities in the US and elsewhere that have been successful in installing and
maintaining clean, safe stand-alone public restrooms open 24/7. Most of these lessons learned
and best practices, albeit not all, are reflected in the criteria that the Working Group is to
follow both in selecting an appropriate stand-alone public restroom model and in identifying
appropriate locations for them to be installed.

They are as follows:

Key considerations in selecting an appropriate stand-alone public restroom model

- Designed with safety considerations in mind, ideally using crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles¹
- Encourages users to spend a limited amount of time in the facility in order to maximize restroom use
- Kept clean
- Reasonable in price
- Easy to clean and maintain
- Arrangements made for signs so that users can identify restrooms locations

Key considerations in selecting an appropriate site for a stand-alone public restroom

- Located in a visible area
- High level of pedestrian and vehicular traffic
- Input and buy-in from the surrounding community (ANCs, community associations, businesses)
- Near water and sewer facilities,
- Provisions in place for community and business monitoring during the day, and police monitoring at night.

These lessons learned and best practices are drawn primarily from the extensive knowledge we have gained regarding the design of and experience with the Portland Loo. As I believe we have mentioned in prior hearings, more than 50 Portland Loos have been installed in over 23 cities and, due to its success, the numbers are growing. All, except one, followed the guidelines for siting, and to our knowledge, have not had problems with safety or inappropriate use. The one exception is San Diego which installed a Portland Loo in an

¹ CPTED principles are based on anticipating the thought processes of a potential offender and creating an environment that discourages follow-through. CPTED has the added advantage of creating a sense of security and well-being among employees and tenants. When CPTED is put into practice, the resulting environment - including the building and its surroundings - will discourage or impede criminal behavior, and at the same time encourage honest citizens to keep a watchful eye. <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-394571>

inappropriate location, not following the siting guidelines. The result was that the Portland Loo was vandalized and had to be removed.

We are not as familiar with the experience with Automated Public Toilets, the other stand-alone public restroom option. We understand there have been mixed experiences when it comes to safety, that it works well in some locations and has encountered difficulties in others.

We are hopeful that the Mayor will include the \$336,000 in her FY 2020 budget needed to provide the funds for the two pilots. Otherwise, as I mentioned above, it will not be possible to form the Working Group and start implementing the provisions included in Bill 22-0223. If she doesn't, we hope that you and your fellow Council Members will include this funding during the DC Council markup process.

We are testifying today and at the February 28 Department of General Services Oversight Hearing because we believe that the funding to carry out the pilots could be placed in the DPW or DGS FY 2020 Budgets, or both.

I am attaching two documents to this testimony:

1. The list of lessons learned/best practices reviewed in this testimony
2. An overview of the three public restroom options

Our thanks again for your important role in making Bill 22-0223 a reality.

ATTACHMENT 1

Lessons Learned/Best Practices from Cities that have Successfully Installed and Maintained Clean, Safe Stand-Alone Public Restrooms

Key considerations in selecting an appropriate stand-alone public restroom model

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ATTACHMENT 2

Three Public Restroom Options

PORTLAND LOO³ *(size of a parking space)*

	<p>Designed using crime prevention measures to avoid being used for illicit activities and for easy maintenance.</p> <p>Installed and successfully maintained in 23 cities in US and Canada; number of cities in US & growing.</p> <p>Attractive Open 24/7 Clean Safe</p> <p>\$94,000 purchase/transport. \$32,000 - \$38,000 installation if close to water/sewer lines \$12,000 - \$ 20,000/yr. maintenance</p>
<p>www.portlandloo.com</p>	

AUTOMATED PUBLIC TOILET *(size of a parking space)*

	<p>Found in New York City, San Francisco, many cities in Europe & Asia</p> <p>Attractive Open 24/7 Clean, issues in some locations Safety issues in some locations</p> <p>\$250,000 - \$1,000,000 purchase \$25,000 - \$35,000 installation if close to water/sewer lines \$100,000 - \$150,000/yr. maintenance</p>
<p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanisette</p>	

³ Preferred by PFFC Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative based on research on lessons learned/best practices elsewhere: designed using crime prevention measures (louvers so can see and hear what is happening inside, lighting inside and outside at night, blue light to discourage needle use), lower cost to install and maintain (utilities are solar powered, 1.25-gallon flush, easier to keep clean., maximizes use by not having hand wash on outside).

LONDON COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME



[https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/transport-and-streets/clean-streets/Pages/Community-Toilet-Scheme-\(CTS\).aspx](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/transport-and-streets/clean-streets/Pages/Community-Toilet-Scheme-(CTS).aspx)

Government provides a financial incentive (600 Euro/year) to private businesses to make their toilets available to public

Businesses display special stickers in their windows

Signs indicate where they are located

75 participating businesses in downtown London borough.

In use in other cities in England, Germany, and throughout Australia