

Testimony of George Olivar
People for Fairness Coalition Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative
February 27, 2020 Oversight Hearing
Department of General Services

Facilities and Procurement Committee Chair White, members of the Committee on Facilities and Procurement, DGS Director Anderson.

My name is George Olivar. I am a proud member of the PFFC Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative.

When we began 5 1/2 years ago we had a dream. Our dream was that clean, safe public restrooms would be available for everyone in needed areas of Washington DC.

Little did we anticipated that that this Initiative would lead to a Bill, which then became Law, to pilot two public restrooms options. We are committed to ensuring that the pilots under Law 22-280 are carried out appropriately and, if successful, lead to the DC government's expanding access to clean, safe public restrooms for everyone.

Our thanks to the many individuals and organizations that have supported this dream. 11 ANCs sent resolutions to the City Council, supporting the public restroom Bill. Three BIDs weighed in supporting increased access to public restrooms in DC as did 25 community organizations. Over 2,000 individuals signed petitions asking the DC Council to support the public restroom Bill. And, to our delight, Bill 22-0223 was unanimously passed by the DC Council in December 2018.

Our thanks, in particular, to you Council Member Robert White for making Law 22-280 a reality. Without your support funding would not be available for piloting the standalone public restrooms.

Law 22-280 means a great deal to me personally. When working many years outside of the US as a Buddhist Monk, I was in several countries, such as Austria and Australia, where public restrooms were readily available.

When I returned to the United State in June of 2014 I found that my Social Security income was not sufficient to permit me to rent a room or apartment. I started living on the streets. It was particularly difficult at night to find a clean, safe restroom that was open 24/7.

In November of 2014 I became a member of the People for Fairness Coalition and was very happy to see that PFFC was launching a public restroom Initiative which I have been closely involved with ever since.

We all need to use a restroom when nature calls. Access to a clean, safe public restroom is a human right. It is fundamental for human dignity.

Thank you for permitting me to testify.