

Testimony of George Olivar
at the February 6, 2019 Oversight Hearing
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services

Committee Chair Gray, Members of the Committee on Health, Acting Deputy Mayor of Health & Human Services Turnage,

My name is George Olivar. I am 71 years old. I have diabetes which makes me restroom challenged. When I was homeless sleeping outside at night I couldn't find a restroom and sometimes had no choice but to relieve myself outside. As I get older my bladder gets smaller causing me to need to urinate more frequently.

I am here today to share my story to highlight how important it is for the DC government to finance clean, safe public restrooms for people like myself and others when nature calls.

Bill 22-0223, Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act which was passed by the DC Council in December 2018, has passed from the Mayor to the U.S. Congress where it will be returned to the Mayor to sign into law, takes important steps to do precisely this by forming an Interagency Working Group charged with studying the feasibility of and recommending two public restrooms pilots. For this to happen, the Mayor must include \$336,000 in her FY 2020 Budget for the first year of the pilots.

I came to Texas from Mexico in 1973 and became a US citizen. In 1994 I went to Asia where I served as a Buddhist monk in several monasteries. When I returned 20 years later I chose Washington DC because I wanted to study the large collection of literature on Buddhism at the Library of Congress. Since arriving, I have had a difficult time as a senior finding a job. I found that I could not live on my Social Security so I became homeless.

For four years I was in and out of homeless shelters and living on the street. I had a very hard time finding restrooms in part because many restaurants only permit patrons to use their restrooms. I try my best to hold it in as much as I can. Because I am diabetic, sometimes I have diarrhea and I have to find a restroom urgently. There are times when haven't and have had an accident. It is embarrassing.

We all need more clean, safe, public restrooms available 24/7 in Washington DC. Everyone needs to find a place where they can urinate and defecate in a safe environment.

I urge the Mayor to include \$336,000 in her FY 2020 budget to finance the first year of the public restroom pilots.

Thank you very much.