

Testimony of Marc Friend
Department of General Services Oversight Hearing
February 28, 2019

Committee Chair White, members of the Committee on Facilities & Procurement, Department of Public Works Director Anderson,

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

It was two days before my wedding when after a few months of an upset stomach, I awoke from a 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 year.

One of the toughest challenges of an inflammatory bowel disease is one's need for a restroom quickly and without warning. Just recently I was on our national mall enjoying a beautiful day when the urgency came. There was no restroom anywhere to be seen. I tried to make it to one of the Smithsonian Museums and didn't make it through the line, security, and down to the restroom in time. After that, I had to go home to change, ruining a beautiful day.

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 and those experiencing homelessness, as well as visitors from other countries with dark skin and/or who dress differently, this is not the case.

Bill 22-0223, Public Restroom Facilities Installation & Promotion Act, of 2018, which was passed by two consecutive unanimous votes by DC Council in December 2018, is a first step in ensuring equal access to restrooms. Bill 22-0223 is currently with the DC Congress. When it returns the Mayor will sign it into law. This bill was influenced by the significant research carried out by the People for Fairness Coalition (PFFC) Downtown DC Public Restroom Initiative.

Bill 22-0223 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 must include \$336,000 in the FY 2020 Budget for the first year of the pilots.

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.