

Good Morning Chairman Burger and Members of the Board. I am Lynne Breaux, Executive Director, Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington. RAMW is the local affiliate of the National Restaurant Association. Approximately half of the establishments licensed for the on-premises sale and service of alcoholic beverages in the District of Columbia are members of RAMW.

On behalf the Board of Directors, I am here to speak in opposition to a continued moratorium on the issuance of on-premises licenses in the Dupont Circle East neighborhood. We take this position, not on behalf of the establishments already in the neighborhood, many of whom you might hear from today, but on behalf of those prospective restaurants and bars that cannot open along the 17th Street corridor because they cannot currently obtain an alcoholic beverage license.

Eating and drinking establishments are the pillars upon which neighborhoods and communities develop and thrive. From the earliest days of this country, which was founded in

taverns and inns, men and women have gathered in the local watering hole or restaurant to gossip, dine, imbibe and often engage in political discourse. Although schools and other amenities are important, a great neighborhood in an urban area is frequently measured by the quality of its restaurants and bars.

These establishments are not just important in the neighborhoods in which they are located. They are an important component of the District's thriving hospitality industry, contributing \$204,6 million in sales tax alone in 2004, the largest private sector employer, employing over 30,000 workers and a major contributor to the current budget surplus about to be enjoyed by all District residents.

Against this backdrop you are to consider the continuation of a moratorium on new alcoholic beverage licenses in the Dupont Circle West neighborhood, a moratorium which has existed for fifteen years without serious challenge. Given the importance of the hospitality industry to

the District's economy and employment and the role of restaurants and bars in local neighborhoods, we believe that proponents of a moratorium should be made to meet a heavy burden. There must be unequivocal evidence that a continuing restriction on new licenses will have a positive impact on the alleged problems in the neighborhood for the Board to extend the moratorium.

We do not believe such evidence exists. We do believe, however, that there is ample evidence that a moratorium inhibits competition from new operators, preserves the status quo and stifles the creativity of commerce in the neighborhood. The moratorium has not encouraged new businesses sought by residents to locate along the 17th Street corridor. Exciting new businesses in the neighborhood have opened, and are opening, in spite of the moratorium, not because of it.

Case in point: Komi Restaurant, which has been nominated for a RAMMY as New Restaurant of the Year to be awarded at RAMW's Annual Awards Gala, opened at 1509

17th Street with a class DR license allowing only the sale of beer and wine. Had its chef/owner, Johnny Monis, who has himself been nominated for a RAMMY as Rising Culinary Star of the Year, realized the difficulties of succeeding as a fine dining establishment without the service of spirits, I suspect he may have seriously considered a neighborhood without a moratorium.

I implore you to allow the next potential Rising Culinary Star to locate in Dupont Circle without the handicap faced by Mr. Monis, if he or she so chooses. If there are problems anticipated from his or her new operation, those can be dealt with in the framework of a contested license proceeding. A moratorium on new licenses for restaurants is unwarranted, unnecessary, and will likely not be justified by the evidence you hear today.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify. I do hope you will join us at the RAMW Awards Gala on June 5, 2005, when Mr. Monis or one of the other deserving nominees

**will be named Rising Culinary Star of the Year and when we
celebrate the current and hopefully continuing thriving DC
hospitality scene.**

Thank you.