



**Restaurant Association
Metropolitan Washington
1200 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 331-5990
Fax (202) 659-8701**

**District of Columbia Council
Public Roundtable**

Committee on Economic Development

Honorable Councilmember Harold Brazil

PR 15-485

**Transfer of Site Control of the Old Washington Convention Center
Property to the Washington Convention Center Authority
Approval Resolution of 2003**

Testimony Presented by Lynne Breaux

Executive Director

Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington

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**John A. Wilson Building
Room 412
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004**

Good Afternoon Councilmember Brazil. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify today. As stated, my name is Lynne Breaux and I am Executive Director of the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington and a resident of Capital Hill. RAMW is a trade association representing over 500 restaurants and food service industry members in the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia.

RAMW is in support of PR 15-485 which would transfer site control of the old Washington convention center to the Washington Convention Center Authority. It is our understanding that passage of this resolution will allow for the Washington Convention Center Authority to demolish the old convention center and develop a parking lot for up to 1200 cars. This would also provide flexible public space for special events until permanent development on the site begins in about three years. Prompt demolition of the old center would also alleviate the confusion of having two convention centers, the old and the new and would thus eliminate the eyesore that the old center is quickly becoming.

As the viability, vibrancy and activity of downtown has increased with the resurging restaurant, retail, living, and convention scene, the demand for parking has also increased accordingly. To paraphrase reversely a much quoted song of the 60's, "They razed an anachronism and put up a parking lot paradise." The need for increased parking in downtown DC is paramount. The use of this prime property for parking and cultural activities, during the planning process on the future of the space, makes practical, good sense.

The Washington, DC restaurant industry is an integral and interested stakeholder in the activities of the old and the new convention centers. The Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington is wholeheartedly in support of PR 15-485 and appreciates Councilmember Brazil's introduction of this resolution to transfer control of the old convention center to the Washington Convention Center Authority. Thank you.