

**Testimony of
Lynne Breaux, President of the
Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington
Before the
Committee on Economic Development and the
Committee on Finance and Revenue
B18-310, the “New Convention Center Hotel
Amendments Act of 2009.”**

**Wednesday, June 24, 2009 at 11:00 a.m.
Room 500, John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004**

Good afternoon Councilmember Brown and Councilmember Evans and members of the Council. I am Lynne Breaux, President of the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington (RAMW). RAMW, a 501(c)(3) trade association, is proud to be the voice of the Metropolitan Washington food service industry and establishments of hospitality with over 700 members ranging from casual eateries to internationally acclaimed fine dining restaurants.

The building of the Convention Center Hotel is of great importance to our membership. As you know, the restaurant industry is a large and crucial segment of the wider tourism industry, contributing significantly to the District coffers, \$220 million in sales tax in 2007 alone, and by our employment of approximately 34,000 individuals. Our internationally acclaimed restaurants have increasingly added polish to the image of the District and added significantly to its attraction as a destination city. However, this attraction has limited impact when coupled

with a Convention Center complex that is, at this point, an incomplete product when compared to other cities' facilities.

Each element of the hospitality industry supports and contributes to the 5.5 billion tourism dollars brought into the District. As strong as our restaurant members are in attracting transient business and tourism travelers, we could not do it without a strong total hospitality community. Without an active promotional entity the transient diner would know less about the vibrant Washington dining scene; without an efficient and convenient transportation infrastructure we would not have diners finding their way to our tables; without our world class hotel industry adventurous diners would be less inclined to travel and stay in the District. And, finally, without an integrated Convention Center Hotel convention groups are faced with an incomplete package when considering their future bookings and are less likely to bring their groups and hospitality dollars to our tables.

What is missing in DC to be truly competitive in the convention sales marketplace is the complement of the convention hotel. We ask that the total hospitality experience be included in considering the new Convention Center Hotel.

RAMW supports the construction of the Convention Center Hotel, and we are encouraged that there is a proposed deal including strong private support that will help get this project underway as soon as possible.