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**District of Columbia Council
Public Hearing**

Committee on Economic Development

Honorable Councilmember Harold Brazil

Bill 15-427

**The Washington Convention Center Authority Term Limit Amendment
Act of 2003**

Testimony Presented by Lynne Breaux

Executive Director

Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington

Thursday October 16, 2003

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

Good Afternoon Councilmembers and staff. 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.

Recognizing the dire need for a new convention center, Washington, DC restaurants and hotels agreed to carry a portion of the tax burden for the construction of a larger, more attractive convention facility. And as I am sure you are well aware, 1% of the 10% Washington, DC restaurant sales tax is thus earmarked. Since FY1997, restaurants have contributed approximately \$113.8 million dollars towards the construction of the building. Now that it is so magnificently completed, our tax dollars are allocated to the upkeep, maintenance and the all important marketing of this beautiful new structure.

The Washington, DC restaurant industry is an integral and interested stakeholder in the activities of the convention center authority. An attractive, well-run and well-marketed convention center is crucial to maintaining and increasing DC's share of convention business which is in turn crucial to the success of DC's restaurant business, which is in turn crucial to DC's economic vitality. In 2002 alone, DC restaurants contributed approximately \$170 million just in sales taxes to the city's coffers. According to National Restaurant Association statistics, 1/3 of all meals served in white table-cloth restaurants are generated by tourists and conventioners. Convention centers are economic drivers for entire regions and it is impossible to overstate the importance of the role of the Washington Convention Center Authority.

The Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington is wholeheartedly in support of Bill 15-427 and appreciates Councilmember Brazil's proactive introduction of this bill. With the recent resignation of the General Manager and the Chairman of the Board and the potential term expiration of at least four members of the Board out of a total of nine, there is understandable concern regarding a smooth transition of all operational aspects. Extending Board term limits at this critical time, so shortly after the grand opening, would alleviate these concerns by providing the continuity of experienced Board members' oversight and management, ensuring the fiscal stability of this major economic engine for the entire city. Thank you.