

PUBLIC HEARING

BEFORE THE

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BILL 15-1085 – “TAXICAB AND LIMOUSINE SERVICES REFORM  
AMENDMENT ACT OF 2004”

TESTIMONY OF:

**LYNNE BREAUX**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON, D.C.**

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2004

JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, 5<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

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**Task Force on Taxicab Reform Testimony  
Lynne Breaux, Executive Director  
Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington**

Good evening Councilmember Schwartz, members and staff of the Committee on Public Works and The Environment. Restaurants, hotels, tourism, transportation and the resulting revenue are intertwined. It is imperative that the District of Columbia maintain efficient modes of transportation for our residents and our visiting tourists and business travelers.

My name is Lynne Breaux and I serve as Executive Director of the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington (RAMW). Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of Bill 15-1085 Taxicab and Limousine Services Reform Amendment Act of 2004 on behalf of our Board of Directors and our membership.

I am a long time resident of Capital Hill and I partake extensively of our Metro system and taxis. Most of the taxicab drivers I encounter are courteous and polite, hardworking and responsible. I respect their

work ethic and appreciate what they do for a living, but the disparity between some of the cars and some of the drivers cries out for regulation and increased oversight. And I have often been refused service since I live in Southeast.

From *The New York Times Magazine* March 7, 2004 Special Travel Edition, "Washington: Some of my Favorite Things," by Claire Messud, writes about DC's taxicabs with an out-of-towners perspective, "the supremely illogical zone system, which, instead of using meters, divides the city into payment sectors designed to make the politicians' commute cheap; the disconcerting oddity of multiple customers with multiple destinations, crammed into a single cab; and the eccentricity of the drivers, whose knowledge of the city may be tenuous at best, but whose interest in global politics is often passionate and voluble."

This bill is a good first step in the right direction in the effort to fix the existing problems within the taxicab industry. Taxicab reformation is indeed integral to continuing DC resurgence as a vibrant restaurant and nightlife town.

This is not just about meters, it is about a needed overhaul of the regulations addressing crucial taxicab issues creating uniformity and conformity of the taxicab fleet and trained city-knowledgeable taxicab drivers. And to focus solely on the meter/no-meter argument is to lose sight of the overall taxicab industry improvements necessary to properly serve DC's citizens and visitors, though there is no question that the zone system is confusing, convoluted and causes great chagrin with the tourists that are unsure that they are being charged correctly.

As stated, restaurant patrons, residents as well as tourists, are often taxi patrons. It is imperative that for DC to remain and grow as a tourist destination, the vehicle-for-hire industry must be improved.

The market for the traveler's dollar is tighter than ever after September 11, 2001. The meter system and other regulations and oversight work in all major cities, and there is no reason that it would not work here. The Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington respects our fellow hospitality employees in the taxicab industry and strongly supports Bill 15-1085 efforts to improve the taxicab system.