

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Small and Local Business Development



Public Hearing on
B23-0131, the Ward 7 and Ward 8 Restaurant Incentive Program Establishment
Act of 2019

Testimony of
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Director

Before the
Committee on Business and Economic Development
Kenyan McDuffie, Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia

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Room 500
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W
Washington, D.C. 20004



Good afternoon, Councilmember McDuffie, members of the Committee, and Committee staff. I am Kristi Whitfield, Director of the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD). I am pleased to testify before you today.

DSLBD's mission is to support the development, economic growth, and retention of District-based businesses and promote economic development throughout the District's commercial corridors. Bill 23-131 would amend the Small Business and Certified Business Enterprise Development and Assistance Act of 2005 to require DSLBD to provide funding, business development assistance, incubation services, and technical assistance to those seeking to open a new restaurant or food establishment in Ward 7 and Ward 8.

Since its inception, DSLBD has always been committed to supporting and promoting the District's small and local business community. Under Mayor Bowser's leadership, this commitment has been displayed in many new and innovative ways such as:

- The creation of the District's first Green Book that allows Small Business Enterprises (SBEs) to know where the real opportunities are to work with District Government;
- Doubling of the District's Main Streets and increasing their role in helping create thriving District commercial corridors; and
- Doubling the District's SBE spend to more than \$814 million dollars.

DSLBD continues to showcase our commitment to supporting and promoting the District's small and local business community through:



- Thousands of DC Procurement Technical Assistance Center (DC PTAC) technical assistance hours with District business owners to assist them with how to start a business in the District to how to identify and access the opportunities to work with local and federal government;
- The implementation of the Surety Bond Program that assists businesses in doubling their bonding capacity which helps better position businesses to compete in the District's ever-growing markets;
- Thousands of workshop and training hours assisting businesses with information about how to best utilize District resources to build and grow their business; and
- The District Capitalized program, which last year disbursed \$500,000 in loans to local businesses through partnerships with local Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) and this year has disbursed 263 loans totaling \$1,000,000 into the pockets of small businesses, the majority of which are operating east of the river.
- The creation of strategic partnerships with the Smithsonian and Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority that have positioned DC Makers to increase their global brand recognition while growing their bottom line.

DLSBD understands the need for restaurants and food establishments in communities. The addition of these establishments can help create safer stronger communities, access to healthy food options, and create unique areas where people can gather and grow thriving communities. Wards 7 and 8 need more of these establishments. That's why under the leadership of Mayor Bowser, DSLBD created and supported programs and initiatives to further empower and encourage



restaurant and food establishments to grow in Ward 7 and Ward 8 communities. Some of these programs and initiatives include:

- Launching well-received DSLBD Investment Matters intensive speaker series at Marshall Heights CDO on Benning Road, NE. This nine (9) week series highlights Ward 7 entrepreneurs and those who want to help support those Ward 7 entrepreneurs. Topics have ranged from food equity and building food businesses to youth entrepreneurship, brand-first businesses, mental health, business finances, marketing, and PR.
- Implementing the DSLBD's Grown in DC program, which is a competitive program to support hyper-local food system development of for-profit ventures owned and operated by those who live in eligible areas. This year, we received 26 applications for the Grown in DC program with a majority of applicants focused on healthy food opportunities in both Wards 7 and 8.
- Supporting the Dreaming Out Loud Dream Program, which is a program that assists early stage food startups and has attracted strong participation from Ward 7 and Ward 8.
- Engaging with the Food Policy Council (FPC) with plans to start a fellowship program focused on employee-owned food cooperatives with DC's Department of Employment Services (DOES) and the FPC.

DSLBD would like to continue to work with Council to identify new, innovative ways to expand our existing programs to increase the number of restaurants and food establishments in Wards 7 and 8. The Restaurant Incentive Act, before the Committee, now calls for the creation of specialized training in the niche food industry and to conduct a comprehensive assessment of Wards 7 and 8 regarding the development of new restaurants and food establishments.



Understanding the unique nature of the restaurant industry, we would welcome the opportunity to find ways to build on our current efforts to meet the goals of this legislation.

Urban and economic development is multi-faceted. For this reason, Mayor Bowser is investing in areas all across the District through promoting and providing affordable housing, better educational facilities, systems to support stronger small and local businesses, and creating safer streets – these investments all work toward building greater stronger communities that attract businesses that want to grow, strive and be a positive stakeholder in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. This concludes my testimony and I look forward to answering your questions at this time.

