

Support HB 1147
March 2, 2020

Testimony for HB 1147
Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Single-Occupancy Public
Restrooms - Availability (The Accessible to All Act)

Good afternoon House Economics Matters Committee.. Thank you for hearing my testimony regard HB 1147. My name is Ino Akseptiev and I am one of the owners of Red Emma's. We are a Restaurant, Coffeehouse, Bar, and Bookstore in Baltimore City, at 1225 Cathedral – right across from the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Red Emma's serves a diverse community – MICA and UB students, the residents of the Mount Vernon neighborhood, and symphony-goers, just to name a few of the groups. We're also a tourist destination – we've been written up in the Lonely Planet tourist guide, the New York Times back in 2017 and once again in an upcoming piece about five places to visit in Baltimore. Last year, our first year in our new location, we handled over \$1.1 million of business, and we're growing rapidly – over 10% in Q1 2020 compared to 2019. It was the first location where we had enough space to legally be able to have gender inclusive bathrooms, and it has been nothing but a boon.

In our old location on North avenue we had gendered bathrooms, and one gender inclusive accessible bathroom. People would ask for workers assistance to understand which bathroom they were allowed to use, and also caused a large line for the accessible bathroom, which also made it less accessible for handicapped people whom it was intended for. This wasted the workers' time and did not serve the business in any way, and also alienated a significant part of our community.

Since our move and switch to gender inclusive bathrooms, we have had absolutely zero negative incidents of any sort – there has been absolutely no harassment, it has solved the problem of longer lines that women's rooms often have, and our customers and workers are happier for it. If we were able to make the switch in the old location, it would have been incredibly helpful. The bottom line is that gender inclusive bathrooms are good for business, and not being able to have them in the past was an active challenge to the smooth operation of our space.

We hope that you pass HB 1147 so businesses all over Maryland can reap the benefits of gender inclusive single occupancy bathrooms. Thank you for your time.