



House Bill 896 - Environment - Statewide Green Business Certification Program – Establishment

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 26, 2020

SUPPORT

I appreciate this opportunity to provide my full support of HB 896.

I am a business owner. I have raised millions of dollars in capital, built restaurants, and created thousands of jobs. My business generates millions of dollars in tax revenue and provides for millions of dollars in payroll to the people who work with us. I understand business growth, economic contribution, and longevity. We have 1,500 employees and 7 restaurants; the oldest of which is 11 years old, and continues to grow its revenues every year.

My company provides a resounding case study proving that committing to seeing the environment and the planet as a stakeholder in a business is a path to profit and long-term success.

While some initiatives have a cost to them, they also provide a return on that cost. Employee morale and retention, customer loyalty, landlord favorability, principle-centered investors, and increased customer frequency and retention are a few of the topics that come to mind when I think of the return on investment that I can see from the Green Initiatives that I deploy.

One of the important aspects of this approach to business is the ability to tell the story to the general public. Story-telling is highly credible when a certified third-party is the one validating and sharing the information. This is one of the reasons County or State administered certification programs are so valuable. In addition, these programs educate business owners and operators. They validate and share best practices and become a trusted repository of resources, examples, and case studies.

The Montgomery County Program has been pivotal for my continued green investments. The thought of having such an effective program at the State level is really inspiring. I am certain it would make a meaningful impact on the quest to reduce the negative impacts that business makes on the environment.

In my restaurants, we have reduced the usual amount of waste going to landfills by 80% through the implementation of robust composting and recycling programs. We have reduced our use of single-use plastics through the elimination of plastic straws. These two examples are important, because the more businesses who take these steps, the lower the cost of the step is for the whole marketplace. The more the State can encourage, support, and promote these tactics, the more the momentum grows and lowers the hurdle for every business to implement these changes. We go deep on a variety of topics ranging from an energy usage monitor resulting in lower consumption based on what we learn, to using all-natural cleaning products so that we aren't putting toxic chemicals down the drain and into the local water supply. Speaking

of water, we choose to not sell bottled water but instead provide free filtered still and sparkling water to our guests. This step keeps millions of plastic and glass bottles out of the waste stream.

If I listed all of our green action steps, and told you all about our local sourcing of products and our carbon-footprint mitigation plans, my testimony would be a novel, but I hope that the information I have provided today helps make it clear that HB896 has all upside, and no downside. There should be no partisan view of this initiative. The planet doesn't have a political party, the river in your community doesn't have a political party, the kids in the elementary school don't have a political party. Business *can* be an overwhelming force for good. The lens I choose to see business through is that of Conscious Capitalism. HB896 is a perfect example of supporting and encouraging businesses to take steps that benefit everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Simons', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Simons

Instagram/Twitter/Facebook: @DanSimonsSays

LinkedIn: Dan Simons

Blog: www.DanSimonsSays.com