

Good afternoon, members of the committee. My name is Vince Culotta, managing partner of Cured / 18th & 21st, a restaurant in Columbia, Maryland's Merriweather district. I have been a restaurant operator for the better part of the past two decades, and fortunate enough to own my own business for nearly two years.

During my time in the hospitality industry, one steadfast fact has emerged: businesses that are welcoming to their guests and customers, often, are 75% of the way to success. We work very hard to be welcoming, in fact, one of our core values is that "we treat everyone like family." This is not simply lip service at my company, as I spend nearly two hours during orientation chatting with all new employees about the "why" behind our business.

When we were opening our restaurant nearly two years ago one item that came up was what type of bathrooms we were going to have for our guests. We could have opted for a more traditional set up with one large room for women, a second one for men, and a third as a family restroom. Due to space constraints, we opted for what I now believe is the best solution for everyone: single occupancy restrooms that are devoid of gender specificity. While I realize this option is not for everyone, I honestly believe that if we want to be as welcoming as we can, a solution like this is one of the simplest choices out there.

Single occupancy, gender neutral restrooms not only eliminate confusion for our guests, they help minimize waits during times of high usage, and they foster an environment where everyone feels welcome. We have also seen great support from our elderly and disabled guests for our single occupancy restrooms as well as parents and caregivers of different gendered children.

The response by our community has been overwhelmingly positive. During our nearly two years of operation, I have had numerous individuals laud our choice of single occupancy restrooms, while not one person has expressed a negative opinion. I, for one, am delighted that we can offer something so simple that helps everyone feel welcome in our place of business.

I know that the committee is concerned for any undue stress this may cause for a business, but other than possibly replacing a few signs, I can think of no burden this would place on anyone. I hope the committee will strongly consider moving this bill back to the House floor for a vote.

Thank you for your time.

Vince Culotta
Managing Partner Cured / 18th & 21st