

Testimony of Erika Wadlington
Director of Public Policy & Programs, DC Chamber of Commerce
Before the Committee on Business & Economic Development on October 2, 2017
on
Bill 22-335, THE "WARD 4 FULL-SERVICE GROCERY STORE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2017"

Good morning Chairman McDuffie and members of the Committee. I am Erika Wadlington, the Director of Public Policy & Programs at the DC Chamber of Commerce. I am pleased to be here today to represent the member companies of the DC Chamber, the hundreds of thousands of workers they employ, and the millions of dollars in District tax revenue they provide yearly to the District coffers. The DC Chamber of Commerce has been the voice of all businesses in the District for 79 years. We believe in job growth and creation, and working collaboratively with all our stakeholders (government, employees, and community) to make the District of Columbia a great place to live, and to start and grow a business.

Today, the DC Chamber is working aggressively to expand the economy in the District by attracting new jobs and creating economic opportunities for our members and citizens. The DC Chamber also focuses on issues that impact our future growth and community development, including workforce development, international trade, regulatory and tax reform. As such, we support and encourage the Council to pass Bill 22-335, The Ward 4 Full-Service Grocery Store Amendment Act of 2017.

We support the Committee advancing a committee print to allow new and existing full-service grocery stores the ability to apply for a class B license to sell beer and wine within the ward. Such a measure would revitalize Ward 4's economic fortunes. If existing grocers and those who are looking to expand into Ward 4 had the ability to offer the same goods as they do in other Wards across the city. This would also generate revenue and send the message to existing job creators that the District is becoming more of a business-friendly city. By removing this restriction on new and existing full-service grocers, the District is saying that Ward 4 is ready for more retail options. We know that numerous considerations shape a company's opinion of a jurisdiction's overall business environment, including corporate and income tax rates that are now lower and competitive, the occurrence of tax incentives, the capacity to draw and maintain businesses, and the perceived ease of obtaining licenses. Bill 22-335, would foster that effort and in turn contribute to the District's tax bases, bring diverse retail options and access to residents, and strengthen the local business climate

Like you, we want our business community to be vibrant and strong. As a community, we look forward to working with you and our policymakers as you develop a complement of economic incentives, and revise regulatory burdens to enhance the District's financial position, that is also sensible for all stakeholders and residents.