September 22, 2022

DC Chamber of Commerce Provides Testimony to the DC Council Committee on Government Operations for "Stop Discrimination by Algorithms Act of 2021"

Greetings Chairman White, Councilmembers, and staff. My name is Angela Franco, and I am the President and CEO of the DC Chamber of Commerce. As the leading business organization in Washington DC the Chamber serves a diverse membership of over 1,000 small and large businesses. Our mission has always been to be the most valuable resource and leading advocate for businesses throughout the District of Columbia and our vision is to create a vibrant, thriving economy that improves the quality of life for all in the District, establishing mutually beneficial partnerships between business, government and the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the member companies in opposition to the advancement and passage of Bill 24-558, the "Stop Discrimination by Algorithms Act of 2021".

In the limited time I have before you today, I would like to convey three major themes.

First, on behalf of the Chamber, I am here to acknowledge that the proponents of this bill arrived at the issue of algorithm usage by a growing cross-section of institutions – spanning both private and public sectors, both commercial and charitable sectors, both large and small, both here in the District and across the planet – with good intentions. I would never claim to be an expert on the subject of the legislation before us today: the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence. What I *have* learned is that the subject matter is highly technical and exceedingly complex. Important issues have arisen in connection with this topic, and we at the Chamber stand ready to continue the

conversation about the appropriate use of these emerging data tools. But, simply stated, this bill needs lots of additional work and it is the wrong time to address those issues. You have now heard from dozens of witnesses from across the country and, indeed, from right across town who have raised a series of concerns about both the scope and the substance of the pending legislation. We also anticipate providing additional post-hearing written comments to further address issues such as threshold definitional concerns, compliance issues, auditing methodology, and other matters that run right to the core of the legislation. I would only ask that you take all these concerns to heart as you consider whether to proceed further with this bill.

Second, it is important to keep in the front of our minds the basic fact that algorithms have become a powerful tool to help all of us draw the right conclusions --- equitable, just and fair-minded -- from the growing amount of information we are gathering every single day in our work together and in our communities. You have heard the same theme shared by multiple witnesses today, and we anticipate submitting additional written information as well.

Finally, for most of my adult life I have been engaged in often-times intense efforts to help promote a broad range of business ventures. Today, I serve as a passionate advocate committed to the cause of supporting entrepreneurs and the at large business community in this city. I have witnessed its benefits not only for our business owners, workers and customers, but also for the vital role local entrepreneurs play in our DC neighborhoods and the broader community. As we all know, the last few years have been some of our most difficult in recent memory, especially, for many of our small business owners and workers. And that is why I am particularly concerned about the impact this bill could have on those small businesses, low-margin enterprises that – often unknowingly through vendors -- access beneficial information in ways that this legislation could add significant costs to their operation. From the family-owned

neighborhood dry cleaner to the startup restaurant this bill could impact their work – and their lives – in a way that at this point we are not able to identify.

In conclusion, we stand ready to work with you, Mr. Chairman, and the rest of your Committee members and staff on this important topic. At this point we cannot support this bill.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to offer testimony. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.