

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

**From:** Nathan Epstein <nathan.epstein.1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 8, 2024 12:13 AM  
**To:** DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)  
**Subject:** Case 21177 District of Columbia Department of General Services

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Written Testimony in Opposition

Dear Chairman Hill and Board Members

My name is Nathan Epstein, and I reside and have a business at 1115 6th St NW, Washington, DC 20001 both. Please deny the special exception relief sought by the District of Columbia Department of General Services for the proposed temporary relocation of the Central Cell Block to 501 New York Avenue NW.

I would like to stress just how close we are to the convention center, and how disruptive this jail would be for my business, as well as the business of the convention center, and for business travellers. 501 NY Ave is less than a five minute walk from the front gate of the Walter Washington convention center.

During large events, this area is saturated. Foot traffic radiates out from the convention center and engulfs the area directly around the proposed jail, back and forth to the hotel rooms further down on NY avenue, and towards the restaurants and coffee shops in Mt Vernon Triangle.

My business is a licensed short term rental. Many of my guests are attending events at the convention center. The three most common question I get are:

- 1: "how do I get to the convention center?"
- 2: "and how do I get to the grocery store?"
- 3: "Is it safe for me to walk around in the area?"

It's directly from my experiences trying to make my guests comfortable coming to this city that I understand their concerns. Bringing a jail right to my doorstep, and to the doorstep of the convention center would be damaging to the interests of the guests that I serve.

There are guests that I have that are already operating at the edge of their capacity far from their home and in a big city for the first time in years. How can I advise these people how to be more streetwise related to activities occurring around the jail?

The area is bustling at times, yes, but it must be considered, that all of the activity around the convention center only occurs at the will of the event organizers, and it's contingent on the kinds of experiences that convention center attendees have during their time here. If the city cannot put its best foot forward in the immediate vicinity of this activity, they go elsewhere and they will not return.

This is \$6+ Billion dollars of economic activity a year, in this immediate area around the convention center. So, I think you need to consider, when the police need to detain someone having a mental health episode and screaming, flailing, beating on the car windows, and they bring them to this place, past a throng of badge holding convention attendees, what is the cost?

Even without this, there are already people that don't want the hassle of coming downtown. They would rather have the convenience and tranquility of a place far out of town, like National Harbor. Discussions already exist in the planning stages of all these events, and it's never unanimous that this location in the center of DC is selected.

If located at 501 NY ave, a jail here will enter these discussions. And each time the convention center is not selected, millions of dollars of economic activity for this city is lost. It's a horrible location for a jail. Horribly for my

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airbnb business, horrible for the neighborhood, and horrible for the city overall.

Thank you for your consideration.

-Nathan Epstein  
CityCenterStay LLC  
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