

Friends of the DC Archives
Testimony Before the Committee on Government Operations
Bill 22-0842 - The Commission on Archives and Record Management Act of 2018
September 27, 2018

Good day, I am Fynnette Eaton, interim Chair of the Friends of the DC Archives. With me today are two of our members, Trudy Huskamp Peterson and Carl Bergman. Ms. Peterson was Acting Archivist of the United States for more than two years. Mr. Bergman is a former Deputy DC Auditor and was a long-term Council staff member. I am a more than 30- year resident of Ward 6 and a retired Federal archivist. Among other duties at the National Archives, I was the Change Management Officer for the Electronic Records Archives Program.

The Friends of the DC Archives (friendsofdcarchives.org) is a group of professional archivists and others advocating for: a) a new, state-of-the-art DC Archives; b) more staff and better facilities at the current Naylor Court Archives; and, c) a comprehensive DC Government records management policy.

FDCA believes that a strong Archives is necessary to promote an understanding of our history and ensure accountability of our public officials. We support the preservation and accessibility of all our records, whether historic or contemporary and in all formats, and proper management of the District Government's records by a high-quality, professional staff. We believe that the Commission is a major step toward this goal.

The FODC deeply appreciates Chairman Todd's interest in this often overlooked, but critical issue and his bill's initiative. We are fully supportive of the proposal to establish this commission to comprehensively examine the District's many archives and record management practices. We feel the commission is the correct approach to focus attention on both the short- and long-term needs of our archives and for preserving and managing the city's records. After Chairman Todd brought up the commission idea in a meeting with our members, the Friends has had extensive discussions about how to support and strengthen the commission.

To be more specific, we see the commission as an opportunity to bring the now separate records of the DC courts, schools, police and fire, transportation, the Council and the independent agencies into a central preservation and record management regime. For

example, the commission could examine locating all DC Archives in one place as Maryland and Virginia do and almost every other state does.

Under such a scheme, the archives would be responsible for managing records in all forms, both paper and electronic, including audio or video audiovisual, as well as architectural drawings and plans.

We have several technical comments on the bill that are attached. These include the commission's qualifications, the need for a high-visibility chair, its duration, budget, public participation, archival requirements, review of prior DC archives studies, and the long-standing question of the new Archives building's location.

Again, we want to thank you for the opportunity to testify and thank the bill's seven co-sponsors: Chairman Mendelson, and Councilmembers Allen, Bonds, Gray, Cheh, Grosso, and Silverman.