

Committee of the Whole Public Hearing

Protecting Historic Homes Amendment Act of 2023, Bill 25-576

March 27, 2024

Testimony of Beth Purcell on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society

(submitted online, in advance)

Good afternoon. My name is Beth Purcell, and I am the Chair of the Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS). CHRS is an educational and charitable organization dedicated to advancing historic preservation, on Capitol Hill. CHRS strongly supports the Protecting Historic Homes Amendment Act of 2023. We suggest a change to the Act to improve enforcement:

Section (2)(B) of the Act provides alternative penalties for “substantial demolitions, alterations or new construction.” “Substantial demolitions” may be difficult to administer. We suggest a different definition of substantial demolitions, based on two sections in the 2017 DC Building Code, defining “substantial damage” and “substantial structural damage.”

2017 DC Building Code, definitions pp. 91 et seq.

SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE. Damage of any origin sustained by a structure whereby the cost of restoring the structure to its before-damaged condition would equal or exceed 50 percent of the market value of the structure before the damage occurred.

Alternatively, substitute “assessed value” for “market value”
Or:

SUBSTANTIAL STRUCTURAL DAMAGE. A condition where one or both of the following apply:

1. The vertical elements of the lateral force-resisting system have suffered damage such that the lateral load-carrying capacity of any *story* in any horizontal direction has been reduced by more than 33 percent from its predamage condition.
2. The capacity of any vertical component carrying gravity load, or any group of such components, that supports more than 30 percent of the total area of the structure’s floors and roofs has been reduced more than 20 percent from its predamage condition and the remaining capacity of such affected elements, with respect to all dead and *live loads*, is less than 75 percent of that required by this code for new buildings of similar structure, purpose and location.

Thank you for considering our comments.