

**Written Testimony Submitted by
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**Before the
Committee on Government Operations and the Environment
District of Columbia**

March 23, 2010

Hi, I'm Sam Rahman. As a member of several DC-based organizations including the Worker Rights Consortium and United Students Against Sweatshops, I have heard the stories of workers affected by apathetic sourcing policies and politics firsthand. I also know the effectiveness when major institutions, such as the DC Council, take a leadership role in sustainable sourcing by supporting responsible contractors who take measures to ensure that human dignity is respected.

Currently the global garment manufacturing system exists as a loose network in which major, often US-based companies and brands subcontract production to places abroad, which then can hire further subcontractors. Working conditions in these factories can be abysmal as you have already heard, ranging from forced pregnancy tests and abortions to women literally being chained to their sewing machines. As such, forming a committee as part of the procurement bill to investigate ways in which DC can sustainably contribute to the solution is an effective method to leverage the district's salient position in the metropolitan region, as well as nationally. This model has worked for universities across the nation that have leveraged their buying power to improve conditions for millions of workers overseas, and can work for our fair city as well. If DC becomes a leader on sustainable sourcing, other municipalities will become more responsive to local concerns to promote the environment, workers, and healthy communities.

I applaud the current language in the bill relating to worker health and safety, but all too often the opacity of the subcontracting system aids apparel brands in exploiting weak language to all but ignore the policy framers' concerns. We need to make sure that the proposed procurement reform legislation has strong clear language that will protect the individuals who make the uniforms our transit employees and school children wear and the protective clothing that keeps our police officers and firefighters safe. The proposed Sweatfree DC amendment would create a committee that could draft effective language that will both protect workers rights and make sure the new policy works for DC government and small business. If the proposed amendment is accepted DC will be a leader in responsible contracting that protects the environment, the DC community, as well as workers. Please accept the addition of the Sweatfree DC amendment.