



American Restroom Association

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ARA Says Starbucks Must Keep its Bathrooms Open to the Public, Citing U.S. Plumbing Codes

Catonsville, Maryland, USA (August 23, 2022) — Recently, CNN reported that “Starbucks can’t be America’s public bathroom,” and that the company, according to CEO Howard Schultz and top leadership, is considering “closing restrooms” as an option (<https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/21/business/starbucks-bathrooms-stores-closing/index.html>).

However, according to the American Restroom Association (ARA), the nation’s leading advocate for clean, safe, and well-designed public restrooms, Starbucks cannot legally do this, as it would violate U.S. plumbing codes. Said ARA President Steven Soifer, Ph.D.: **“According to the International Plumbing Code (IPC 403.3) Starbucks (as well as other business establishments) must make their toilet facilities available to ‘customers, patrons, and visitors’ defined as anyone walking into their place of business.”** Each of the currently applicable plumbing codes in all governmental jurisdictions across the country requires this accommodation (see, for example, coverage in the *Wall Street Journal* <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB112232855662695358>).

“If Starbucks either closes all their bathrooms or limits their use to actual paying customers, **the company will find itself running afoul of municipal, county or state plumbing codes** and opens itself up to either fines or lawsuits or both,” said Soifer. For better or worse, and until there are better solutions (more municipally funded public toilets, preferably of the single-occupancy, all-gender design), people – customers or not – will rely on Starbucks, which must continue to be “America’s public bathroom.”

About American Restroom Association (ARA): a nonprofit founded in 2004, ARA advocates for the availability of clean, safe, and well-designed public restrooms. Accomplishments include successfully advocating for enforcement of and revisions to the International Plumbing Code, congressional testimony on gender equity in public restrooms in US Federal Buildings, and representing the USA in educating international audiences at Summits and Conferences of the World Toilet Organization (WTO). ARA brings together a multidisciplinary and independent team from architecture, engineering, education, academia, and social work. Learn more at <http://www.americanrestroom.org>.

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