

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB 365 - "Green School Construction Act of 2022"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 8, 2022



Thank you for considering our testimony today in support of HB 365 - "Green School Construction Act of 2022." Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change causing pollution in our schools and our group is active on the campaign in Prince George's County. In particular, we are currently working directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a Climate Change Action Plan for PGCPS

The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report found that limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100 would require human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach 'net zero' by 2050. Science tells us an end date for burning fossil fuels. We also know from the Maryland Department of the Environment's own inventories that buildings are a major source of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) in Maryland. HB 365 is an important step to reducing GHGs from school buildings.

Just looking at fossil-fuel fired boilers in PGCPS, of the approximately 450 boilers in use they are on average about 20 years old, about 15 percent are older than 25 years, and one is from 1962. It is not unreasonable to expect that boilers installed in 2025 will still be in use in 2050. That means if we are installing fossil-fuel fired boilers going forward we are either deciding not to meet zero emission climate goals or we are planning on investing in infrastructure that will not be used for its full useful life thus wasting taxpayers money.

PGCPS has shown that nearly fossil fuel free schools are not just possible, but are often the best decision financially. PGCPS is relying on a new financing model for six new schools. Of these six schools five will be heated using geothermal systems rather than fossil fuels, and geothermal was chosen because it was the option that made the most economic sense in light of the 30 year total cost of ownership calculations currently required by the IAC.

It is not just alternatively financed schools where this is possible. Prior to relying on the alternative financing model, PGCPS constructed six new elementary schools, one new middle school, and one new high school that relied on geothermal heating rather than fossil-fuel fired boilers. It is also not just new schools, PGCPS recently renovated Glenarden Woods and Tulip Grove Elementary Schools and found it made economic sense to switch from fossil-fuel powered heating to geothermal heat pumps. Of course, there are economic alternatives now for other fossil-fuel fired equipment, including heat pump water heaters and induction cooking.

We are at an inflection point when it comes to our future investments. Will we make good investments knowing what the scientists have to do to stave off the worst of climate change or will we make unwise investments? We implore you to enact this legislation that will require Maryland schools to choose wisely in regards to fossil-fuel use in future projects, for our children's sake.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.