

**Testimony on: CR-032-2022**

**Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's**

**Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: July 12, 2022**



Dear County Council:

Thank you for considering our testimony in support of CR-032-2022, a “Resolution Concerning Adoption of the Climate Action Plan.” Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change–causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George’s County. In particular, we worked directly with Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a Climate Action Plan for PGCPS as part of a Board of Education Focus Workgroup.

We are already seeing first-hand effects of climate change in our County, most particularly in recent flooding events in Cheverly and Fort Washington and an increasing number of high temperature days. In fact, shortly after CR-032-2022 was voted out of committee on June 23, several families whose homes are located in the FEMA floodplain were displaced due to a high rain event.<sup>1</sup> That is why it is vital to adopt, finalize, and implement the Climate Action Plan as policy for Prince George's County, rather than simply "accepting" the plan and letting it sit on the shelf, as has happened with plans in the past. The younger generation already faces a grim climate future. Further delay is not an option for them.

The Climate Action Plan is important for our schools and our children in many ways, including:

- *CO-2 - Lead by example and ensure transparency in climate action.* Leading by example will demonstrate to our children that we are taking their concerns and future seriously.
- *M-1 - Power County operations with 100% renewable energy.* PGCPS has followed suit and committed to powering all operations with renewable energy. Streamlining permitting with DPIC for solar installations will ease PGCPS in building onsite solar. Having cooperative purchases between the County and schools can help bring down costs as well. Additionally both the schools and the County will need to develop an alternative approach to procuring renewable electricity since the current approach that PGCPS takes by relying on contracts developed by Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee (BRCCPC) is not workable and all County governments will need to collaborate on a new approach.
- *M-4 - Accelerate deployment of EVs and charging infrastructure by County and other public agencies.* In their *Climate Change Action Plan*, PGCPS has committed to increasing the number of charging stations at schools so that staff and visitors that drive EVs can charge while parking. Streamlined permitting again will help with success, as will collaborative purchasing on EV charging infrastructure.
- *M-10 - Expand County waste reduction and diversion efforts.* Expanding composting facilities to allow the entirety of PGCPS to send compost offsite will be crucial for the school system to be successful in expanding its own composting program that is likely required for some schools under a state law passed in 2021 HB 264.
- *M-11 - Enact and Enforce “No Net Loss” tree conservation regulations.* New schools should not be constructed in undisturbed forested areas. Having a no net loss tree regulation in place

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/07/03/flooding-maryland-dc-silver-spring/>

should be applicable to County construction, including of schools, and would further encourage construction of facilities in places where infrastructure already exists.

- *A-2 - Implement climate resilient stormwater management and expand flood mitigation programs.* Due to the cost of land, schools in our county are often built in areas that experience flooding. Additionally, as our planet warms, there will be an increase in flooding that is already baked in. Because of this, we need stormwater management that makes all areas more resilient and mitigates flooding to the extent possible. If not, we will wind up with taxpayer-funded assets that are destroyed prior to the end of their useful life, students whose education will be disrupted by the need to relocate, and possibly more dangerous situations when flash floods occur at schools.
- *A-9 - Adopt codes, standards, and practices to support climate-ready green buildings and development.* As schools are built and renovated, they will need to be built to standards for climate-ready green buildings. Having county policies reflect that will take the burden off of PGCPs to justify stricter energy standards and encourage better, environmentally sound construction practices.
- *A-10 - Promote a healthy food system supported by low-carbon, regenerative practices.* PGCPs feeds thousands of children day in and day out. These students need healthy food in order to thrive. Having a holistic, healthy food system in Prince George's County will make it easier for PGCPs to procure such food for the students.

This list of course just scratches the surface of some of the clearest connections between the Prince George's County Climate Action Plan and the path that PGCPs must take for a sustainable future. It is certainly clear, though, that adoption of the Climate Action Plan will lead to numerous positive synergies that will benefit all levels of government, County employees, students, and the population at large.

We also must reiterate that numerous grants and other funding from the American Rescue Plan, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and state and private funds will be awarded to make communities resilient to climate change and help to mitigate emissions. Having a Climate Action Plan adopted by the County will provide another point of evidence to grantors that we are prepared to spend these funds and can make the most of any awards. These funds will not only benefit our community in terms of climate change, but will also help reduce the energy burden on low-income residents, make our streets safer, and lessen the impact of flooding on Prince Georgians.

Our children are counting on the County Council to adopt and finalize the Climate Action Plan. This plan is an excellent road map for the next several years for moving County policy in a direction to mitigate our carbon emissions and make Prince George's more resilient in the face of already existing warming. Adoption and implementation of this Climate Action Plan is also necessary for the successful implementation of the PGCPs Climate Change Action Plan. We know that we have champions for our children on the County Council, and we encourage a successful vote to adopt and finalize the Climate Action Plan and begin working on its implementation.

Sincerely,



Joseph Jakuta  
Lead Volunteer  
Climate Parents of Prince George's