

Testimony on: Agenda Item 5.3 - Approval of the Blueprint School Phase II Package Educational Specifications (Alternative School Construction Financing Package II)

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Date: November 19, 2022



Dear Board of Education:

Thank you for considering our testimony on Agenda Item 5.3. Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change-causing pollution in our schools, increase the climate resilience of our school infrastructure and capacity, and benefit the children, educators, and staff that will be impacted by a changing climate. 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 Change Action Plan (CCAP) for PGCPS as part of a Board of Education Focus Workgroup.

The specifications are excellent efforts to implement the goals of the CCAP. Most specifically the inclusion of some of the relevant priority areas starting on page 2. We commend PGCPS for taking this change seriously in its planning of new buildings. We are particularly encouraged by the inclusion of the need to construct schools to be Net Zero Ready (NZR) and most specifically the need to look at fossil fuel free HVAC systems. The inclusion of the requirements to look at all possible grant and tax programs is also important given the ways in which the Inflation Reduction Act has opened up the tax credit program to school systems and other governmental agencies.

Concerning transportation, it is good to see that EV powered parking spaces will be a requirement for parking, that the pedestrian and bicycle traffic will be separated from vehicle traffic, that bicycle parking will be included, and that stormwater will factor into parking. In the future we do encourage parking to be designed to consider EV expansion up front to avoid costly upgrades later.

We are encouraged by the robust inclusion of outdoor learning space since this can be an alternative learning venue during future disease outbreaks and allows students to engage with their environment. The inclusion of gardens and potentially even greenhouses are of specific note and should be commended. We are concerned though that some of the fields will still be artificial turf as that does not comport with the CCAP and we are under the impression that artificial or synthetic turf is being phased out of use.

Overall this is an excellent package and PGCPS is making great strides. At this point the only other area we want to address is the cafeteria. In the future we do want to see inclusion of scratch cooking ready development so that PGCPS can move to more climate-friendly healthy food options with greater ease. Additionally, we are concerned that the specifications outlined in House Bill 566 from the 2022 legislative session involving waste disposal infrastructure, namely the need to have compost disposal in cafeterias, are not included in the requirements.

While we do think some improvements can be made, this is an important step towards implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan and we encourage this policy to be adopted expeditiously. It is a serious

update from the first six Blueprint Schools, which were constructed very sustainably in their own right. Once again PGCPs is proving itself to be a leader in leaving the planet a healthier place for the children they educate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Jakuta". The signature is written in a light grey or blue ink and is positioned to the right of the "Sincerely," text.

Joseph Jakuta
Lead Volunteer
Climate Parents of Prince George's