

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

House Bill 0686
Public Schools – Health and Safety – Carbon Dioxide Monitoring in Classrooms
(Safe School Indoor Air Act)
Environment and Transportation - Feb. 25, 2022
SUPPORT

Mr. Chairman Barve and Respected Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club** (WDC) for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

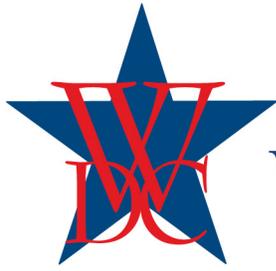
WDC is in full support of **HB686**, which establishes the Safe School Indoor Air Program in the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to improve indoor air quality in public school classrooms. The program requires local Boards of Education to develop a policy and implementation plan to monitor carbon dioxide levels in each classroom, remediate when there is an elevated level of carbon dioxide at 2000 ppm in a defined space, and to publicly share the data that is collected.

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitoring provides a measure of how much air is being exhaled and rebreathed by others in indoor spaces—it's essentially a proxy for ventilation. Benefits of improving indoor air quality in schools encompass improved learning and overall health. The Interagency Commission on School Construction gives guidance to schools that a healthy CO₂ level is 1200 PPM¹, the first action level defined in this bill. Scientists have directly linked increased ventilation to higher test scores, reduced spread of infectious diseases including SARS-CoV-2², and minimized absences.³ Increasing ventilation reduces indoor air pollutants that are triggers for chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma and lowers the risk of acute infection to many airborne illnesses. These health co-benefits contribute to lower absenteeism and increased learning opportunities. WDC has a long history of supporting families' health. This bill will do that and will contribute to less time off for busy parents that is needed when children are ill, especially in families that suffer from asthma and other respiratory diseases.

¹ https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/covid_guidance_full_080420.pdf

² Zhang, J. (2020). [Integrating IAQ control strategies to reduce the risk of asymptomatic SARS CoV-2 infections in classrooms and open plan offices](#). *Science and Technology for the Built Environment*. 26:(8),1013-1018, DOI: [10.1080/23744731.2020.1794499](https://doi.org/10.1080/23744731.2020.1794499).

³ US EPA. Evidence from Scientific Literature about Improved Academic Performance. <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/evidence-scientific-literature-about-improved-academic-performance>. Updated September 29, 2021.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated how important healthy air quality is to children, staff, and their family's health. The effort and the expense will far outweigh the benefits by reducing sick days⁴, improving academic performance, and having healthy air to breathe in our schools.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report for HB686.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views.

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President

⁴ <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-12-770>