

**Testimony on: HB 376 - “Study on the Feasibility of Relocating the Prince George’s County Public School System Headquarters”**

**Committee: Budget and Taxation**

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

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

**Position: FAVORABLE**

**Hearing Date: March 26, 2024**



Dear Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for considering our testimony to HB 376 - “Study on the Feasibility of Relocating the Prince George’s County Public School System Headquarters.” 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 recently worked directly with Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first in the nation School Climate Change Action Plan. This Climate Change Action Plan was adopted unanimously by the PGCPS Board of Education in April of 2022.

Relocation and consolidation of Prince George’s administrative functions was one of the specific recommendations in the Climate Change Action Plan. It read as follows:

*A. Consolidate PGCPS administrative staff in one centralized space, preferably in a location centrally located in Prince George’s County and use an efficient building specifically designed for office functions. (O4.Buildings.A)*

*B. Cease using the existing inefficient office buildings and use the properties for replacement buildings or other suitable purposes, with the possible exception of keeping one inefficient building solely for use as a “test bed” under recommendation O3.Buildings.A. (O4.Buildings.B)*

Accomplishing this will allow staff to access their jobs more easily through public transportation when they are in the office. A new facility will also be a more healthful working environment, given the condition of existing buildings. Finally, a new building can be constructed with the same movement towards sustainability that PGCPS is using to build its new schools, which will lead to cost savings down the road.

Another major reason for moving PGCPS headquarters is access to the Board of Education. Last April, when we were testifying at the Sasscer Building in favor of the Climate Change Action Plan, we met a high school student from Charles Herbert Flowers High School who was testifying in favor of better public transit access for students, especially those involved in extracurricular activities. He actually had taken public transit to get to Sasscer. Examining Google Maps, it became apparent that it would have taken him 1 hour and 45 minutes to get there, including taking three buses and walking for 30 minutes. All of that effort was put into testifying for three minutes. And to get home, he would have had to spend the night there and take a bus at 6:00 the next morning (though thankfully, his mother picked him up). PGCPS students should have access to their Board of Education, and since most of them are not even of driving age, it is vital that a new headquarters be built with robust access to public transit even in later hours so that our students can participate in the public process.

The study being instigated by the legislation is a step in the right direction. We support a **FAVORABLE** report on this legislation.