

Good Afternoon, My name is Katy Levine and I am testifying in support of HB 997. I am a parent with two children in Montgomery County Public Schools.

HB 997 proposes a meaningful way to grow the number of robust green schools by helping schools that are earlier in the green school process to learn from schools with strong, integrated and sustained green school efforts.

This makes a lot of sense given how overextended MCPS staff and teachers are today. Some schools have managed to excel with their green school efforts, often due to a confluence of serendipitous factors such as having teachers who are passionate about the environment and who also have capacity to spend significant personal time developing and implementing innovative sustainability and environmental programming. This fortuitous combination of passion for the mission of the green school program and time to spend on it does not exist at every school. HB 997, which proposes establishing some schools as green school models for other schools to learn from, recognizes that some schools are leaders in this area and facilitates sharing that expertise.

A key element of the Green School program is student opportunity and engagement. Providing opportunities for student exposure to nature and engagement in sustainability practices is good for student learning and wellbeing. Studies show that exposure to nearby nature positively impacts wellbeing and also academic achievement. Separately, climate change anxiety is an increasing concern. A recent study highlighted in Yale Sustainability suggests that collective action may be a buffer against climate change anxiety for young adults. Sara Lowe, of Yale School of Public Health, published a research paper “finding that anxiety about climate change was linked to symptoms of depression only in those NOT engaged in group activities to address global warming.” By supporting students in sustainability practices, the Green School program is likely supporting students in the collective action that protects their mental health.

All MCPS students should have access to these benefits. Model schools that can serve as hands on learning locations for teachers go a long way in efficiently supporting additional teachers in developing the skills, experience, confidence, passion, and camaraderie necessary to further green school programming at additional schools.

I am in support of HB 997.

Thank you for your consideration.

Resources

Climate Change Anxiety

- *Yale Experts Explain Climate Anxiety*, Yale Sustainability: <https://sustainability.yale.edu/explainers/yale-experts-explain-climate-anxiety#:~:text=Last year, Lowe co-authored,activities to address global warming.>
- *As climate changes, climate anxiety rises in youth*, CBS News: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/climate-change-anxiety/>
- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00278-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext)

Children and Nature Network has an extensive number of resources. Here are links to a couple of their valuable infographics:

- *Nature Can Improve Academic Outcomes*, Children and Nature Network: https://eadn-wc04-796033.nxedge.io/wp-content/uploads/CNN20_BNAcademicOutcomes_23-3-25.pdf

- *Nature Can Improve Health and Wellbeing*, Children and Nature Network: https://eadn-wc04-796033.nxedge.io/wp-content/uploads/CNN20_BNHealth-and-Wellbeing_23-3-24.pdf
- *Nature Play Can Encourage Care For The Earth*, Children and Nature Network: https://eadn-wc04-796033.nxedge.io/wp-content/uploads/CNN20_BNNatureChampions_23-3-24.pdf
- *Green Schoolyards Can Improve Academic Outcomes*, Children and Nature Network: https://eadn-wc04-796033.nxedge.io/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CNN_2016GSY_AcadOut_d7-23-3-24.pdf
- *Green Schoolyards Can Provide Mental Health Benefits*, Children and Nature Network: https://eadn-wc04-796033.nxedge.io/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CNN_2016GSY_MentalHlth_23-3-24.pdf