



Re: Prioritizing Funding for Development of FCPS a Systemic Sustainability Plan and Green Schools Leadership

Dear Dr. Dyson, President Yoho, Members of the Board, and Dr. Lebo,

As you consider funding priorities in conjunction with development of the FY 2026 Superintendent's budget, Mobilize Frederick urges you to include in your proposed capital and operating budgets adequate funding to support the development and implementation of a systemic Sustainability Plan.

Since February of 2023, Mobilize Frederick has collaborated closely with FCPS's science curriculum leadership to offer professional development and technical support to guide teachers from more than 20 elementary, middle, and high schools to complete Maryland Green School certification. Attaining Green School certification is prestigious in the State of Maryland and critical to the achievement of the State's legislated climate goals. This program is supported by the State Legislature, which set a goal in 2017 for at least 50% of Maryland's public and private schools to become certified. Administered by the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education, this certification means that schools embed environmental literacy education across the curriculum, empower students to develop and lead environmental stewardship activities, work closely with community partners, and reduce the environmental impact of school buildings and grounds.

These important objectives align with those of the Livable Frederick Master Plan and the Climate Response and Resilience Report, two foundational documents of the County Executive's Administration, and are responsive to the climate goals set forth by the Frederick County Council in the Climate Emergency Resolution adopted in 2020. Two students representing the local chapter of the Sunrise Movement formally asked the Board of Education to develop and commit to a comprehensive Sustainability Plan in August 2023. Seven schools within the District have attained Green Schools Certification and 16 more schools have launched initiatives to qualify them for the certification process. Meanwhile, students involved in Green Schools activities experience greater academic achievement, enhanced civic engagement, and more hope for the future.

In addition to this partnership, it is imperative that FCPS demonstrate clear leadership by also making school campuses a model of climate forward and environmentally sustainable practices. Districts in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, and Baltimore City each have comprehensive Sustainability Plans that can serve as a foundation for the development of an FCPS Sustainability Plan. Key elements of a robust Sustainability Plan should set ambitious goals and targets, and should, at a minimum, include:

- Requirements for new schools to meet Gold or Platinum LEED standards;
- A commitment to installation of solar systems on new schools and where feasible, existing schools;
- Food recovery, recycling, and composting programs;
- Fleet and school bus electrification;



- Training on sustainability practices for staff;
- Integration of sustainability practices into the curriculum;
- Climate resilient land management;
- Addition of a Green Schools/Sustainability Coordinator; and
- Addition of a dedicated grant writer position to take advantage of the many federal and state grant opportunities.

Mobilize Frederick strongly recommends that the Superintendent's budget allocate an estimated \$100,000 to retain the services of an independent consultant to develop a systemic Sustainability Plan through an inclusive process. In addition, a Green Schools/Sustainability Coordinator (\$125,000) is recommended to work in the central office with both curriculum and operations staff, to directly support environmental education and sustainable practices in schools and school grounds and to develop reporting metrics and accountability measures. This would include training custodial and support staff to fully implement recycling, composting and land management programs.

We also recommend that teachers leading Green Schools activities should receive stipends (\$1,518 - \$3,515 each). Up to 35 schools are estimated to be involved in the 2026 academic year, resulting in \$87,500 in teacher stipends. A qualified grant writer is proposed at \$115,000 and is expected to generate at least hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund projects that support Sustainability Plan implementation. The total proposed for these sustainability needs is \$427,500, with a substantial return on investment through anticipated cost savings, based on the experiences of other districts.

Several good faith efforts by community groups and individual teachers have been attempted to implement sustainability practices in FCPS public schools over the years. A presentation ([here](#)) made to the Board of Education in 2017-2018 showcases a good example of a composting project in Urbana schools. These initiatives have shown promise and involved extensive commitment by the community but have been hampered by a lack of top-down support and appreciation for how important these practices are to achieving the county's, state's, and nation's climate goals.

FCPS has a critical leadership role to play in the County's achievement of its climate mitigation and resilience goals. The bus fleet and inventory of buildings make FCPS one of the County's top contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. School districts with Sustainability Plans and trained staff regularly report energy savings of millions of dollars from investments made in clean energy production and energy efficiency measures. The creation of a Sustainability Plan can identify baseline emissions and associated costs, recommend changes, and estimate future savings to help guide the Board on future capital and operational investments. Without a plan, the District loses precious time, and is likely to invest in new building construction, renovations, and technologies that are not well aligned with climate and other environmental goals.

The implementation of a systemic Sustainability Plan will build on a robust Green Schools program. Students well-versed in the scientific rationale for conservation and sustainability practices are excellent partners in the achievement of major sustainability objectives. The creative and motivated teachers



leading Green Schools certification efforts regularly report increased job satisfaction when students lead and succeed in stewardship efforts.

Thank you for your full consideration of these proposals. We appreciate the chance to provide input and are available to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Bunitsky", is written in a cursive style.

Michael Bunitsky
Government Affairs Committee

cc: Barb Trader, President of the Board
Karen Cannon, Executive Director