

District of Columbia City Council
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

March 26, 2010

Bill: Healthy Schools Act 2009

Dear Council Members:

My name is Amy Jagodnik and I am the parent of three Horace Mann Elementary students and a regular volunteer in the school garden and on the school improvement team.

I am here today to voice my support for the Healthy Schools Act of 2009. I am very impressed with the breadth of change suggested in the bill. I feel it speaks so well to the needs of my family and our school community, and I think it sets a wonderful standard for our city -- a standard that will make our city a model for others to follow.

As a parent, I have seen the garden-to-table connection in action since our school has had a hands-on learning garden for many years. My children, since pre-K, have worked the soil, raised the vegetables, shared salad parties, and benefited from visiting chefs. One most memorable moment was when my then first grade son requested I make Arugula Pesto Gnocchi for dinner just the way he prepared it with Chef Geoff Tracy at school because: "It tasted so good!" I would never have been able to get him to try such a dish on my own. The difference is that school is a safe haven in which to try new things, to test one's sense of adventure, a place to be inspired. As a result of this work at school, my now third and fifth grade children understand about making healthy eating choices.

Our school has begun to enlighten our students to the benefits of responsible environmental practices and when they learn them early, it really sticks. One eye-opening school practice is the trash-free lunch day when scales are brought into the lunch room and trash is weighed. Hands down, hot lunch loses the weigh-in every time with its abundance of disposable packaging and uneaten foods. The wrong example is being set. It would be nice if hot lunch was the "Biggest Loser" in the trash department rather than the biggest loser in the nutrition and recycling department that it is today.

As our school looks forward to renovation in 2013, parents and faculty are already discussing how we can improve our food and nutrition program, reduce our community's carbon footprint, and make sustainability practices a core part of our children's education. After all, our children will inherit a host of pressing environmental and health challenges and we need to prepare them to act accordingly. We are so encouraged by your progressive action on the issues in this bill which will help us move that agenda forward, not just for our children at Mann, but for children and families all over our city. Experience shows that change happens quickly when both top down and bottom up forces are at play. We are ready to meet you half way.

Amy Jagodnik
3702 Corey PL NW
Aj-arts@verizon.net

