

**Testimony before the
District of Columbia Council
Committee of the Whole
and
Committee on Government Operations and the
Environment**

on the

**“Healthy Schools Act of 2009”
Bill 18-564**

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Written Testimony of:

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Good afternoon Chairman Gray and Chairwoman Cheh and members of the Committee of the Whole and the Committee on Government Operations and the Environment. My name is Cassandra Pinkney and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Eagle Academy Public Charter School, Washington D.C.'s first exclusively early childhood public charter school. Our school now educates children ages 3 years old through 1st grade, and will continue to expand to the 3rd grade over the next two years. Eagle Academy is accredited through the Middle States Association Commission on Elementary Schools.

I would like to begin by thanking Chairman Gray and Chairwoman Cheh for their leadership on this important issue. Eagle Academy strongly advocates in favor of the passage of the Healthy Schools Act of 2009, Bill 18-564. Other states are considering legislation on healthy schools, among them New York, California, Mississippi, and Michigan. However, none of those bills is as comprehensive as this one. Bill 18-564 goes beyond a mandate to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. This bill seeks to (1) improve nutritional standards and requirements for meals served in public schools; (2) establish a Farm-to-School program; (3) increase physical education and wellness program requirements; (4) make our public schools green; and (5) establish school health centers in public high schools by 2015.

I believe this bill represents a major step forward in reversing child obesity rates, in promoting healthy eating and physical activity, in promoting local sustainable agriculture practices, and in greening our schools. However, pertaining to Title VI –

Health and Wellness, I think it is particularly in the area of the integration of medical services in public schools where the District of Columbia could set the highest standards in the nation. In fact, we at Eagle Academy Public Charter School, in partnership with Howard University Hospital and United Planning Organization, are in the process of establishing a Full Service Community Center that will integrate academics, child care, and full-time medical services, mental health services, and dentistry, combined with social services, cultural services, community development services, and recreational opportunities in D.C.'s poorest and most underserved ward.

We will be running this model program from a brand new LEED Silver Standards facility (hopefully Gold) utilizing healthy and sustainable building design, construction and operations, including energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. In addition, an environmental education program will be established for the community using the building itself as a model for how to be environmentally friendly at home.

We believe that we can demonstrate through the construction of this Full Service Community Center that with intense wrap-around services, including nutritional meals, physical activity, wellness education, and environmental stewardship, low-income children can achieve at very high levels academically and sustain that achievement over a period of years. We can also demonstrate that low-income communities can become safe, cohesive, contributing communities by using their public schools to provide

professional services that residents need: medical, dental, social and mental health. This would be the first public school in the District of Columbia to which many other urban school districts would come to see how to turn around an underserved community. The establishment of this unique, first-of-its-kind model program of a Full Service Community Center will provide a framework for structuring similar programs across the country.

We look forward to the opportunity to fully brief Chairman Gray and Chairwoman Cheh on the Full Service Community Center we are establishing in Ward 8 as well as work with the City Council and the D.C. government in making it a reality.

Thank you very much.