

TESTIMONY OF DR. THORNELL K. PAGE ON BILL 18546 "HEALTHLY SCHOOLS ACT OF 2009," BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & THE ENVIRONMENT.

Good morning Councilperson Cheh, committee members and staff. I am Dr. Thornell K. Page, President of Page Research Associates a community development company in the District. I served as Director of the Extension Service (ES) at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and Director of the Urban and Rural Economic Development Grant in the federal government during the Clinton Administration. Also, I am the founder of the RFK Stadium Farmers Market.

I speak to you today, not as a representative of the University or the federal government, but as a resident of the District and a community development professional experienced in farmer market operations. I interested in improving the health and wellness of residents and creating economic opportunities for residents without privilege in the District

To achieve the goals of Bill 18546, I recommend the Committee seriously consider adding ES at UDC as a partner in planning and implementing the Bill. In 1918 the Smith-Lever Act established the ES, a Congressionally-mandated, nation wide, non-formal educational network that takes research knowledge from 106 public land-grant universities to people where they live and work in communities. In most states the educational offerings are in the areas of agriculture and food, home and family, the environment and youth. I make this recommendation because of the successful history of extension programs in nutrition, agriculture, environment and youth.

Now, I will speak specifically to the Farm-to- School section of the Bill. The basic question for the Committee to focus on in the Farm-

to-School section of the Bill is “how can the District develop a viable farmers market system for receiving, processing and distributing large quantities of local fresh nutritional foods at affordable prices to District of Columbia Public Schools and other large non-commercial food serving institutions?”

The farmers market at RFK Stadium is a market with the potential to meet the requirements of Bill 18546 in time for the school year 2011. The market is located on the parking lot adjacent to RFK Stadium. The site is ideal for a large regional farmers market. Transportation is not a challenge. It is adjacent to the Anacostia Interstate 295 and Suitland Parkway and accessible by CRX Railroad and the Anacostia River. The RFK Stadium market site does not currently have a central warehouse, loading docks, storage facilities, kitchens and office accommodations. However, the Stadium is located on the same parcel of land as the market and has the required assets. It is equipped with the capacity to receive, process, and distribute large quantities of fresh food products. The Stadium has been an under utilized facility since the Redskins moved to Prince George County. A lease agreement between the operator of the RFK Farmers Market and the DC Convention and Sports Authority will provide the market with access to the entire stadium facility.

The RKF Stadium Farmers Market is not an experiment in how to operate large farmers markets based on a set of untested assumptions. Rather is the result of over twenty years of cooperation between regional farmers and residents to provide fresh, nutritious affordable foods and consumer education to the public. Finally, the existing farmers market at RFK Stadium can readily be expanded to meet the requirements of the Farm –to-School Bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important Bill. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have for me.