



# Aban Institute and Associates, Inc.

*Discover. Engage. Educate. Participate in Life Changing Activities.*

Testimony presented before the Council of the District of Columbia  
for

Healthy Schools Act of 2009

by

Nura Green, Executive Director

Aban Institute and Associates, Inc.

March 26, 2010

Good Morning/Afternoon Chairman Gray and Councilwoman Cheh and to your distinguished colleagues, members of the District of Columbia Council. I am Dr. Nura Green, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Aban Institute and Associates, Inc (Aban). Aban was founded in 1998 in Washington, DC to address issues affecting at-risk populations. Our mission is to reclaim our children, rebuild our families, and revive our communities through comprehensive programs and economic development. We focus on three areas to accomplish our mission: Health, Education and Violence prevention.

In 2005, Aban formalized our health activities and created a health awareness program called Healthy Activities Promotion Project for You (HAPPY) to encourage healthy lifestyle changes for the entire family. We saw that health or rather the lack of health, health resources, activities, and information was a problem in the communities that we primarily serve (Wards 7 and 8). We believed that it was important to sound the alarm about the many risks associated with preventable illnesses like obesity, Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular and kidney diseases, various cancers, HIV/AIDS, and more; while doing our part to change lives.

Our goal for HAPPY is to:

- Increase knowledge about wellness
- Promote exercise and healthier living activities
- Encourage prevention, early detection, and treatment of chronic illnesses

Since 2006, we provided outreach to more than 1500 residents at Anacostia Park Roller Skating Pavilion. Every Saturday from late spring to early fall, we focus on a specific health topics (i.e. diabetes) and invite community organizations, agencies and individuals to share their resources with residents; thereby, becoming the bridge to linking access to health resources to hard to reach populations. And we encourage residents to engage in physical activity like roller skating, to get moving together as a family.

Last year our summer youth program had 10 youth health delegates ages 14 – 17 years old primarily from Wards 7 and 8. Through our health program the participants received training and certification in health literacy and nutrition. As a result the youth had the opportunity to attend field trips to hospitals, universities, libraries, congress, and environmental organizations while learning how health impacts their daily lives, their families and communities. Also, they created our first teen newsletter with two issues, and Powerpoint presentations on various health topics. These items can be viewed on our website at [www.abaninstitute.org](http://www.abaninstitute.org) under youth initiatives.

I applaud Council for drafting the legislation in this bill and recognizing what many health and nutrition advocates have been urging for years (as previous testimonies have stated) that schools need to provide healthier food choices, ensure our children are engaged in regular physical activities, and to look at the local region as the main sources for providing healthy foods. While this bill is not perfect, I am hopeful that provisions, i.e., funding, will ensure outreach and recruitment to our local community and farming

organizations, as well as, businesses in this region with preference and/or points given to District based entities.

As testimony has shown, there is a significant need in our most fragile communities to provide, promote and engage in healthier living activities, starting early and often. For example, 1 in 5 District resident live below the poverty level, 1 in 3 children live in poverty, Wards 7 and 8 have the largest concentration of children under the age of 18, the highest amount of low-income families in the city, and lowest amount of healthy food choices in terms types of stores, accessibility to stores, accessibility to locally grown produce, and healthy products being sold in those stores. In addition, these communities tend to have a significant amount of carry-outs, fast-food, and liquor stores that do not carry healthy food choices. These factors have combined with other social determinants of health to create an unprecedented explosion of obese children in our most fragile communities, with many short and long-term health implications for the children and their families ( i.e., higher prevalence of Type 2 diabetes, asthma, kidney and cardiovascular diseases to name a few.)

Through this legislation, I hope it creates an environment within District public and charter schools that is conducive and receptive to a healthier lifestyle. That we can sustain these efforts by being a fully funded mandate and that the process remains open and transparent. That we provide schools within the communities with the greatest needs the technical assistance and resources to participate in the mandates of this bill, especially if they do not have the manpower or technical skills.

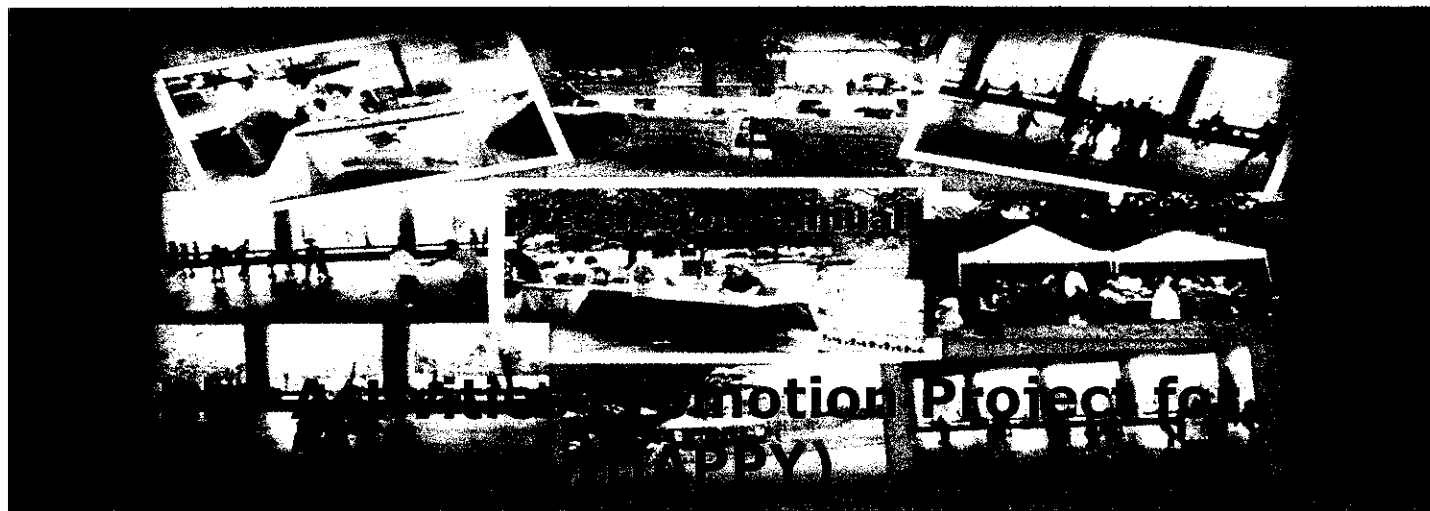
That we communicate, share and educate parents about the importance and benefits of this legislation in very real terms, plain simple language. For example, how does this benefit their families? Why healthier foods are essential to their child's growing needs? Furthermore, we need to ensure that they are fully engaged in the process. How can we empower parents to advocate for healthier choices when their schools are not doing it well enough?

And since many of our children and youth participate in out-of-school time activities, these organizations or entities providing this service should have access to the same resources (funding, access to food choices, locally grown food) as schools. That we continue to collaborate with all the entities represented here, through soon to be established, Healthy Schools and Youth Commission, and other existing initiatives - to share ideas, information and research as a result of enacting provisions within this Act. Ultimately, it is my hope that through this legislation we will work together to ensure no child in the District of Columbia will go to bed hungry, not eating a healthy meal in a day. Together, we can make this a reality.

Aban believes all children in DC deserve to live, learn, grow and thrive in schools and communities that support and nurture their well being. Thank you Chairman Gray and Councilwoman Cheh, for this opportunity to testify on behalf of this historic legislation. This concludes my testimony.

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# Aban Institute and Associates, Inc.



## @Anacostia Park Rollerskating Pavilion

Healthy Activities Promotion Project  
for You (HAPPY) is presented by

The following is our tentative summer schedule. All activities occur on Saturdays from 1PM – 5PM at Anacostia Park Roller Skating Pavilion. Schedule is subject to change.

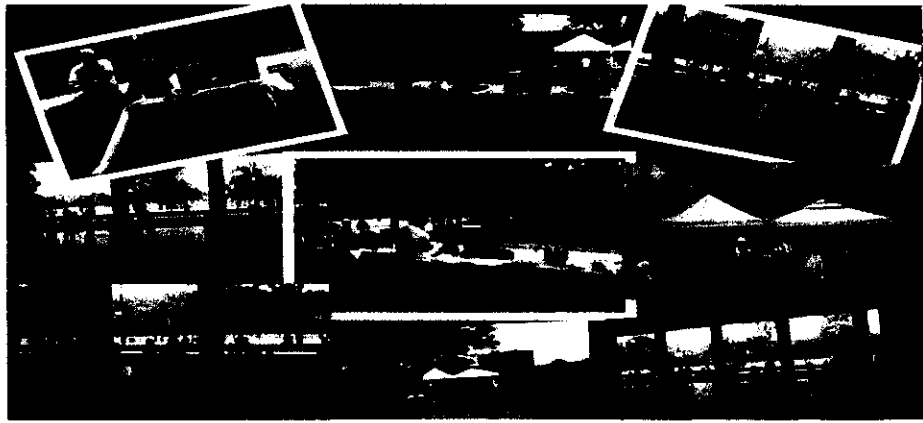
- **June 12**    **PHYSICAL FITNESS AND NUTRITION**
- **June 19**    **HIV/AIDS**
- **June 26**    **DIABETES, KIDNEY, AND HEART DISEASES**
- **July 10**    **CANCER PREVENTION**
- **July 17**    **HOLISTIC HEALTH**
- **July 24**    **CHILDREN'S HEALTH**
- **July 31**    **WOMEN'S HEALTH**
- **August 7**    **MEN'S HEALTH**
- **August 14**    **VIOLENCE PREVENTION**
- **August 21**    **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION**
- **August 28**    **EcoFriendly Day**
- **September 11**    **WORDS, ART AND DANCE**

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**OCTOBER 2 ANNUAL COMMUNITY WELLNESS FAIR**



## ABOUT ABAN INSTITUTE AND ASSOCIATES, INC.



Aban Institute and Associates, Inc. Aban was founded in 1998 as a non-profit organization with the mission is to reclaim our children, rebuild our families, and revive our communities through comprehensive programs and economic development.

We believe that promoting education, health, and peace will provide the tools needed to ensure our most vulnerable populations live, grow, and thrive in communities that support and nurture their needs. That is why our programs are family centered, community focused initiatives.

Contact us

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[www.abaninstitute.org](http://www.abaninstitute.org)

Since 2006 and through community partnerships, our HAPPY project has provided over 1200 residents with culturally appropriate, literacy sensitive, and age appropriate health information on diabetes, kidney disease, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, fitness, domestic violence prevention, breast and prostate cancer prevention, and more.

Through partnerships, we provided free HIV/AIDS testing, dental screening, cardiovascular screening, obesity prevention, roller skating demonstrations, education savings information, health insurance enrollment and other wellness promotion resources. Our guest speakers have conducted special presentations on financial literacy, alternative health and nutrition, and navigating of health information on the web.

*Visit our website  
and find out how  
you can support  
our efforts to Live  
Healthier DC.*