

West End Revitalization Association (WERA)

"We are not getting the basic public health amenities that our taxes pay for!"

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Camila Thorndike, Legislative Assistant
Senator Bernie Sanders
332 Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-5141

RE: Input and Comments: Green New Deal for Public Education Act

The West End Revitalization Association (WERA), 501©-3 nonprofit, is pleased to be invited to share input and comments regarding the proposed **Green New Deal for Public Education Act**. The overview that proposed "*\$1.36 trillion total over 10 years, along with technical assistance and other resources, for public school districts to advance environmental, health, economic, and educational equity*" is impressive and necessarily courageous, like Senator Bernie Sanders.

WERA has been offered, in the past, to share "Green New Deal" ideas with Senator Sander's office via other legislative aids and staffers on matters such as environmental justice, safe drinking water, sewer service access, and other infrastructure amenities often denied in communities that WERA represents and supports since 1995. There is a clear nexus between infrastructure amenities and quality educational facilities, funding, staffing, technology, transportation avenues, and many more soft and hard resources, again, long denied to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other low wealth and marginalized communities.

All these disparities, intended or otherwise, speak very loudly here in Mebane, NC (Alamance County and Orange County). WERA co-founder Brenda Wilson is a retired Special Education teacher who taught in Mississippi and North Carolina. Our son is a special needs teacher, and his wife is an elementary school teacher as well. WERA co-founder Omega Wilson also taught at the college level.

We believe that the Green New Deal for Public Education Act and the priority for \$1.36 trillion is long overdue. Two years ago, there was a teachers march on the North Carolina General Assembly demanding long overdue paid increases and upgrades of school facilities, technology, air conditioning, and removal of lead in old schools' water infrastructure. And yes, some schools have issues with black mold, mildew, and leaks that damage ceilings. Coastal areas schools are often damaged by hurricanes, and some are not repaired or replaced.

These educational disparities impede student achievements and test scores necessary for them to enter college and earn scholarships. Medical science has informed us that lead in drinking water, including old hallway water coolers, result in a lifetime of lowered IQs, health burdens, pain, and suffering. All the educators in our family have experienced stuffy classrooms without windows for sunlight and poor ventilation. This is environmental injustice in education. Let this proposal support student and teacher gardens on campus ground for biology, biochemistry, agri-business, and ecology classes. Just get more sunshine while they learn about the outdoor environment.

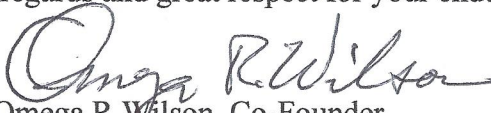
Specific to the Resource Block Grant, there are major concerns for transitioning teaching assistants and part-time teachers to full time positions as the North Carolina student population grows in this ninth most populated state. There is an urgent demand for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx teachers, staff, and administrators.

The Education Equity Grants Program section drew major concerns that need addressing beyond policy and funding. We live in Alamance County, NC where some county commissioners and school board members express greater interest in saving a century old confederate monument, in front of the county courthouse, than removing systemic racial barriers to educational achievement. The school boards and local government agencies will gladly take federal funds that they vote against. **How will this proposed legislation implement local oversight and regulations to insure equity and fairness of budget allocations for Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students, teachers, staff, and administrators? Too often local parents must resort to legal actions to obtain even a modest level of compliance.**

The Title I and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) draws heartfelt and career experience support from all of us. The increased funding will support teachers who spend their own money for supplies and resources for these special need students, often without reimbursements.

It is with great pleasure and shared experiences that we support the Green New Deal for Public Education Act! **How are you going to get conservatives to vote for removing barriers to education and a cleaner educational environment? How are you going to implement local equity and oversight in budget allocations of school boards, county commissioners, and state general assemblies?**

Sincere regards and great respect for your endurance and leadership,


Omega R Wilson, Co-Founder


Brenda A Wilson, Co-Founder