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3 **State Board of Education Resolution**  
4 **to Supporting School Access to Funding for Outdoor Learning Options**  
5 **SR21-1**

6 **WHEREAS**, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, parents, educators, and medical experts  
7 have consistently testified at State Board of Education public meetings to request support for  
8 schools to provide outdoor learning options;

9  
10 **WHEREAS**, DC Public School (DCPS) students have testified to DC Council and the State Board  
11 of Education that being in front of computers during the school day is causing them to experience  
12 feelings of isolation, vision problems, and mental and physical stress;

13  
14 **WHEREAS**, low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted  
15 by lack of access to reliable technology needed to fully participate in distance learning and are also  
16 more likely to be impacted by learning loss during distance learning;<sup>1</sup>

17  
18 **WHEREAS**, low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted  
19 by the spread of the COVID-19 virus;<sup>2</sup>

20  
21 **WHEREAS**, currently, Term 3 plans are focused on bringing students back to indoor settings,  
22 even as COVID-19 cases are rising, with an additional surge of cases anticipated following the  
23 holidays;<sup>3</sup>

24  
25 **WHEREAS**, a recent DCPS parent survey revealed that families residing in Wards 5, 7, and 8  
26 are less likely to opt to send their children back to in-person learning or CARE classrooms in  
27 indoor settings;<sup>4</sup>

28  
29 **WHEREAS**, there is substantial scientific evidence that being outdoors greatly mitigates the  
30 spread of the COVID-19 virus;<sup>5</sup>

31  
32 **WHEREAS**, providing families with more options to return to safe, in-person schooling outdoors  
33 will mean more working parents—including teachers—can return to work;

34  
35 **WHEREAS**, due to the pandemic’s impact on students and families, schools must address learning  
36 loss, as well as increased social emotional and mental health needs;<sup>6</sup>

37  
38 **WHEREAS**, outdoor learning has been shown to improve student engagement and academic  
39 outcomes, as well as physical and mental health of students, teachers, and staff;<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://connect.dc.gov/page/fact-sheet>

<sup>2</sup> See for example: <https://news.yale.edu/2020/12/02/black-hispanic-children-bear-disproportionate-burden-covid-19>

<sup>3</sup> see for example <https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/20/us-could-see-another-100000-deaths-by-inauguration-day-doctor-says.html>

<sup>4</sup> [https://45biv636w8lm1agg3oztqg1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DCPS\\_RCC\\_Elementary\\_Survey.pdf](https://45biv636w8lm1agg3oztqg1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DCPS_RCC_Elementary_Survey.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> See for example: <https://apnews.com/article/rhode-island-anthony-fauci-gina-raimondo-infectious-diseases-virus-outbreak-ef7e8bb311a5f71c4afb11f7d3e77e7f> and <https://academic.oup.com/jid/advance-article/doi/10.1093/infdis/jiaa742/6009483>

<sup>6</sup> See for example: <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/student-mental-health>

<sup>7</sup> See for example: [https://www.lawrencehallofscience.org/sites/default/files/EE\\_A\\_Field\\_at\\_Risk\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](https://www.lawrencehallofscience.org/sites/default/files/EE_A_Field_at_Risk_Policy_Brief.pdf) and <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272494419303536>

40  
41 **WHEREAS**, families with means are accessing outdoor education for their children through  
42 enrollment in private schools or participation in privately organized learning pods, which may  
43 serve to widen opportunity gaps within the District;<sup>8</sup>  
44

45 **WHEREAS**, the Mayor’s Office has made funding available for local bars and restaurants to  
46 winterize outdoor seating areas;  
47

48 **WHEREAS**, community-based environmental and outdoor education programs are equipped to  
49 assist schools in offering innovative and supportive partnerships that were available to many  
50 schools across the city pre-pandemic;<sup>9</sup>and,  
51

52 **WHEREAS**, traditional public schools and District public charter schools (DCPCS), as well as  
53 community groups across the city have successfully piloted outdoor door learning opportunities  
54 showing that this is a viable and positive alternative to returning to in-person learning exclusively  
55 indoors;  
56

57 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the DC State Board of Education advises that  
58 Mayor Bowser to create an initial \$4 million fund to be made available immediately in the form  
59 of grants for DCPS and DCPCS schools to apply for—should schools choose to offer outdoor  
60 learning options as part of their Term 3 or 4 reopening plans, as well as for possible summer  
61 programming;<sup>10</sup> and,  
62

63 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, the State Board requests that Mayor Bowser advise the  
64 DCPS to reinstate and increase pre-pandemic funding for outdoor education through partner  
65 agencies and organizations.<sup>11</sup>  
66

67  
68 Date Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>8</sup> See for example: <https://www.nextgenlearning.org/articles/equity-responses-to-private-pandemic-pods>

<sup>9</sup> See for example <https://www.out-teach.org/partner-with-us/school-partners/> and <https://www.freshfarm.org/foodprints/schools>

<sup>10</sup> Outdoor learning infrastructure, broadly defined includes: teacher training, professional development and support, appropriate outdoor clothing, overheard open air shelter for protection from precipitation, handwashing stations, bathroom facilities, open air transportation such as open air buses, protected bike lanes and walking routes so that children have safe outdoor alternatives to indoor contained spaces of subways and buses can be easily scaled up and guidance is available from content experts

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 8.