

Hello committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 854. My name is Benjamin Chen, and I am currently a senior at Westview High School.

Several weeks ago, a green comet shot by Earth, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see one of the most coveted events in astronomy. Yet when I looked up, the twinkling constellations engrossed me far more. The Big Dipper! Rather than the disappearing comet, I found greater comfort in this historic arrangement of stars. It connects us to all those who have come before us, a common view that has lasted longer than all our civilizations combined. So it must be preserved. But with each passing day, pollution makes it more and more difficult for us to turn our gazes upwards and bask in the night sky's glow. Our civilization absolutely should not be the one to end the Big Dipper's lifespan, but rather the one that preserves it for all future civilizations to see.

Your ~~is~~ action on SB 854 can address this by beginning with that exact future—our children. Teaching them the value of our environment, SB 854 is critical to ensuring that the stars above us remain visible and the earth below us remains green. Because most importantly, the environment that surrounds us determines who we are, and who we become. For myself, inner peace is found lying face up towards the sky, each constellation a set of eyes staring back at me. But for others, it could be the crisp air flowing through their lungs during a run, or the lush foliage that surrounds their hikes, or the birds that routinely visit ~~the~~ the flowers in their garden. All of it matters, because the environment is what makes us us. Imparting that wisdom to our children is of the utmost importance.

Climate education serves as a warning. It teaches that our planet is not immortal. Like us, it has a life, and like us, its health must be preserved. Thank you.