
Capital Budget Committee

HB 2297

Brief Description: Requiring the installation of solar energy systems on new school buildings.

Sponsors: Representatives Orwall, Hackney, Duerr, Berry, Ramel, Goodman, Riccelli, Simmons, Pollet and Doglio.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a requirement that public schools install solar energy systems on buildings with more than 50,000 gross square feet that commence construction on or after June 1, 2027.
- Creates an exception process such that installation of a solar energy system is only required if a public school receives a grant from OSPI that covers the actual cost of the solar project.
- Creates a related cost-benefit analysis process, administrative processes, and definitions.

Hearing Date: 1/18/24

Staff: John Wilson-Tepeli (786-7115).

Background:

Solar Readiness Requirements for Nonresidential Buildings.

Subject to certain exceptions, Washington's building code for nonresidential buildings requires that a solar zone be provided on nonresidential buildings that are 20 stories or less in height above grade plan. The solar zone must be located on the roof of the building or on another structure elsewhere on the site. The code also generally requires that these buildings meet whichever of the following results in a smaller minimum area for the solar zone: (1) 40 percent

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of roof area, which must be calculated as the horizontally-projected gross roof area less the area covered by skylights, occupied roof decks, and planted areas; and (2) 20 percent of electrical service size, specifying that electrical service size is the rated capacity of the total of all electrical services to the building, and the required solar zone size shall be based upon 10 peak watts of photovoltaic per square foot.

Summary of Bill:

Solar Energy Requirement.

Subject to an exception process, public schools must install qualifying solar energy systems prior to building occupancy for qualifying school buildings with more than 50,000 gross square feet that commence construction on or after June 1, 2027. This requirement only applies to public schools that receive a related grant award from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Definitions.

For the purposes of this requirement: (a) "commencement of construction" means the date that a building permit is issued under the state building code for construction of the school building; (b) "qualifying school buildings" means buildings owned by public schools that are required to provide solar zones pursuant to the state building code; and (c) "qualifying solar energy systems" means photovoltaic panels of a design, capacity, and quantity sufficient to maximize buildings' or sites' solar energy generation potential, but not to exceed school campus' anticipated electrical energy consumption.

Notification and Planning.

Public schools that plan to construct a qualifying school building must notify the OSPI prior to the commencement of construction of such a building. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must determine the date by which public schools must provide this notification. The notification must include: (a) the estimated cost of permitting, purchasing, and installing a qualifying solar energy system for the planned facility; and (b) a comparison of the proposed qualifying solar energy system's capacity to the school campus' anticipated electrical energy consumption. For the purposes of this comparison, public schools must, in addition to existing electrical energy consumption, include the electrical energy consumption from planned capital investments included in their 10-year capital plans as well as from anticipated improvements required to comply with the state's energy-related building standards.

To facilitate the submission of the required project notifications required and to assess the public benefit potential of each project, the OSPI must: (a) provide technical assistance to public schools for estimating costs and project scope; and (b) perform a cost-benefit analysis for each project that compares the state's investment to the value produced by the project over a period of at least 25 years. As part of each analysis performed, the OSPI must estimate whether the

project would result in a positive net present value over the period of analysis.

Grant Program.

The OSPI must develop a grant program and related administrative processes to implement these solar energy requirements. Subject to appropriations, the SPI must award grants on a reimbursement basis for the actual cost of qualifying solar energy systems installed pursuant to these requirements. The SPI may only award grants for projects that would result in a positive net present value over a period of analysis that is at least 25 years. For the purposes of the compliance exception process, the SPI must establish a timeline for notifying public school applicants regarding grant awards. The OSPI must also: (a) estimate the cost of implementing these solar energy requirements prior to each fiscal biennium; and (b) request related legislative appropriations in each fiscal biennium.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.