
HOUSE BILL 2297

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Representatives Orwall, Hackney, Duerr, Berry, Ramel, Goodman, Riccelli, Simmons, Pollet, and Doglio

Read first time 01/11/24. Referred to Committee on Capital Budget.

1 AN ACT Relating to requiring the installation of solar energy
2 systems on new school buildings; adding a new section to chapter
3 19.27A RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that expanding the
6 use of solar energy is an effective means of reducing greenhouse gas
7 emissions and the state's reliance on the fossil fuels responsible
8 for our rapidly changing climate. The legislature further finds that
9 the use of solar energy to power buildings is generally a cost-
10 effective means of reducing energy bills with a return on investment
11 that may equal or exceed the initial cost. The legislature also notes
12 that the state's building code requires solar readiness for many
13 buildings and that the state's energy performance standard, commonly
14 known as the clean buildings act, is transitioning the state toward
15 ever more energy efficient buildings. Considering these benefits and
16 existing state requirements, the legislature intends to create a
17 requirement, subject to sufficient legislative appropriations, that
18 public schools install solar energy systems on new buildings that
19 exceed 50,000 square feet.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 19.27A
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1) The requirements of subsection (2) of this section only apply
4 to public schools that receive a grant award notification under
5 subsection (4) of this section within the notification timeline
6 established by the superintendent of public instruction.

7 (2) Except as provided for under subsection (1) of this section,
8 public schools must install qualifying solar energy systems prior to
9 building occupancy for qualifying school buildings with more than
10 50,000 gross square feet that commence construction on or after June
11 1, 2027.

12 (3)(a) Public schools that plan to construct a qualifying school
13 building must notify the office of the superintendent of public
14 instruction prior to the commencement of construction of such a
15 building. The superintendent of public instruction must determine the
16 date by which public schools must provide this notification.

17 (b) The notification provided by public schools pursuant to (a)
18 of this subsection (3) must include:

19 (i) The estimated cost of permitting, purchasing, and installing
20 a qualifying solar energy system pursuant to subsection (2) of this
21 section for the planned facility; and

22 (ii) A comparison of the proposed qualifying solar energy
23 system's capacity to the school campus' anticipated electrical energy
24 consumption.

25 (c) For the purposes of the comparison required under (b)(ii) of
26 this subsection, public schools shall, in addition to existing
27 electrical energy consumption, include the electrical energy
28 consumption from planned capital investments included in their 10-
29 year capital plans as well as from anticipated improvements required
30 to comply with the state's energy-related building standards in this
31 chapter.

32 (d) To facilitate the submission of the project notifications
33 required under this subsection (3) and to assess the public benefit
34 potential of each project, the office of the superintendent of public
35 instruction must:

36 (i) Provide technical assistance to public schools for estimating
37 costs and project scope under this subsection;

38 (ii) Perform a cost-benefit analysis for each project included in
39 a notification received under this section that compares the state's
40 investment to the value produced by the project over a period of at

1 least 25 years. As part of each analysis performed, the office of the
2 superintendent of public instruction must estimate whether the
3 project would result in a positive net present value over the period
4 of analysis.

5 (4) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
6 specific purpose, the superintendent of public instruction must award
7 grants on a reimbursement basis for the actual cost of qualifying
8 solar energy systems installed under this section. The superintendent
9 of public instruction may only award grants pursuant to this section
10 for projects that would result in a positive net present value over
11 the period of analysis specified in subsection (3)(d)(ii) of this
12 section. For the purposes of the compliance exception process under
13 subsection (1) of this section, the superintendent of public
14 instruction must establish a timeline for notifying public school
15 applicants regarding grant awards pursuant to this section.

16 (5) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
17 develop a grant program and related administrative processes to
18 implement the requirements of this section and must also:

19 (a) Estimate the cost of implementing the requirements of this
20 section prior to each fiscal biennium; and

21 (b) Request legislative appropriations in each fiscal biennium
22 for the cost estimates developed under (a) of this subsection and
23 submit the first such request no later than September 30, 2024.

24 (6) For purposes of this section:

25 (a) "Commencement of construction" means the date that a building
26 permit is issued under the building code adopted under
27 RCW 19.27.031 for construction of the school building.

28 (b) "Qualifying school buildings" means buildings owned by public
29 schools that are required to provide solar zones pursuant to the
30 building code adopted under RCW 19.27.031.

31 (c) "Qualifying solar energy systems" means photovoltaic panels
32 of a design, capacity, and quantity sufficient to maximize buildings'
33 or sites' solar energy generation potential, but not to exceed school
34 campus' anticipated electrical energy consumption.

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