

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB 300 - "School Buildings – Solar Technology – Solar Panels on Schools"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Favorable With Amendments

Hearing Date: February 7, 2023



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to HB 300, which concerns new requirements for the Interagency on School Construction (IAC) to consider for solar installation on schools. Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we recently worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first in the national School Climate Change Action Plan.

The time is right for solar installation on schools. The Climate Solutions Now Act passed last session provides additional funds to build net zero schools, which often did not pencil out due to solar costs. The Inflation Reduction Act also allows tax-exempt organizations, like schools, to take advantage of solar tax credits and grants are coming soon for EPA's clean schools program. And then there is innovative financing like participation in demand response programs, alternative school financing, power purchase agreements, and community solar, all of which schools can examine.

There are so many benefits of solar on schools too. In light of volatile fuel and electricity prices solar can have a real positive impact on school budgets. Solar can be used as a teaching opportunity for Career Technology Education students and students learning the sciences. There are also the state-wide benefits of reducing the amount of pollution from power production.

1. There should be requirements that energy storage also be required to be considered as part of the analysis. Storage, namely batteries, will make schools more resilient during power outages and help offset grid management issues with solar coming online.
2. The requirements should extend to any school that is undergoing a roof replacement. The main barrier to solar installation on existing schools is roof age
3. We encourage the reporting to require collecting data on cost of install and unit size and preferably collection of best practices for sharing information.
4. There have also been favorable outcomes from having a small portion of the solar panels accessible for STEM learning and allowing the students to view information about solar generation, as was done at Holabird Academy in Baltimore. We encourage the IAC to give consideration for this element in design submissions.
5. Finally, we encourage IAC to be required to set up a clearing house so that information on solar grants, tax credits, alternative financing, etc. can easily be found by all twenty-four LEAs.

Now is the time for us to act. Schools will save money and bring hope and knowledge to the next generation through the path outlined in HB 300.

We encourage a **FAVORABLE with Amendment** report for this important legislation.