

SB235 Cross.pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher West

Position: FAV

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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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March 21st, 2023
The House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Ben Barnes
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 235 - School Buildings - Solar and Geothermal Technology

Dear Chairman Barnes and members of the Committee,

Over the past decade, there has been a considerable increase in the development and use of green technologies. Solar panels in particular have become more commonplace. Furthermore, as the use of this technology has become more prevalent, its cost has diminished.

One issue triggered by the increased use of solar panels is where they should be located – on prime agricultural land or on the roofs of large buildings.

The genesis of this bill occurred three summers ago, when I was invited to an event at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium to celebrate the completion of a project of installing solar panels on the roof of the Cow Palace. The Cow Palace is a huge building with a very large, flat roof. I learned that a solar company had initiated contact with the management of the Fairgrounds and had inquired if the Fairgrounds would permit the company to install solar panels on the roof of the Cow Palace. The company advised that the Fairgrounds would not have to pay any money at all for the solar panel installation. Moreover, on account of the electricity generated by the solar panels and then uploaded onto the electrical grid, the Fairgrounds would receive the benefits of a portion of that electricity and consequently would pay less for its electricity and, over time, would save well over a million dollars on its electrical bill.

Like the Cow Palace, modern schools have flat roofs which sprawl over wide expanses. Thanks to the “Built to Learn Act”, Maryland counties as well as Baltimore City are going to construct lots of schools over the course of the next decade.

In light of the opportunity presented, Senate Bill 235 states that for each school constructed in Maryland from July, 2025 to June, 2034, the local school system responsible for the school construction must consider installing solar panels on the roof of the school. The bill does not impose a mandate requiring solar panels to be installed, merely a requirement that the local school systems consider installing solar panels. The caveat is that if a local school system elects not to install solar panels, it must submit an explanation to the State Commission on School Construction. The bill then provides that the IAC must in turn submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of the State Senate and the Speaker of the House listing the school construction projects in each jurisdiction as to which the local school system decided not to

install solar panels, including the rationale provided by the local school system as to why the decision was made not to install the panels.

Senate Bill 235 and the cross file, House Bill 300 thus will gently nudge the local school systems to consider the efficacy of installing solar panels on school roofs. I believe that if they take a hard look at solar panels, they will conclude that the installation of solar panels will save the new school a lot of money over the decades. The installation of solar panels on these prominent government structures instead of on prime agricultural land will redound to the benefit of the State for many decades to come.

This bill also passed the Senate unanimously.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 235 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

SB0235 Solar and Geothermal Testimony J Benhoff.pdf

Uploaded by: Jean Benhoff

Position: FAV

Witness: Jean Miceli Benhoff
Jurisdiction: Baltimore County
Bill: -SB0235: Schools-Solar and Geothermal energy
Position: FOR with Amendment

Let's bring Maryland Schools into the 21st Century. Save resources using free, pure and natural sunlight and warm waters from the beautiful earth's depths!
This concept is just perfect and will save money to pay teachers who educate our most precious asset: our Children.

<https://www.energy.gov/eere/geothermal/geothermal-basics>

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/geothermal-energy/>

Geothermal energy is heat that is generated within the Earth. It is a renewable resource that can be harvested for human use.

<https://climatebiz.com/advantages-of-geothermal-energy/>

9 Advantages Of Geothermal Energy

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/solar-energy/>

Solar energy is created by nuclear fusion that takes place in the sun. It is necessary for life on Earth, and can be harvested for human uses such as electricity.

SB0235(HB0300) - FWA - Crossover.pdf

Uploaded by: Landon Fahrig

Position: FWA



TO: Members, House Appropriations Committee
FROM: Paul Pinsky - Director, MEA
SUBJECT: SB 235 - School Buildings - Solar and Geothermal Technology
DATE: March 21, 2023

MEA Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

As amended, Senate Bill 235 requires local schools systems to consider whether to construct new schools with solar and geothermal energy systems, and provide to the Interagency Commission on School Construction an explanation for a decision not to include those energy systems as part of the construction of a school. MEA supports the addition of geothermal systems within the language of the legislation, and contends the efforts of the sponsor.

However, it may be appropriate to become even more aggressive with the implementation of solar on new-construction schools.

Currently, Education Article § 5-319(a) already requires “[a]n evaluation of the use of solar technologies, including photovoltaic or solar water heating, based on life cycle costs” during the design phase for both school renovation and new school construction. Similar to this bill, that provision of law requires “a report that explains why the use of the technology is not appropriate” if “an evaluation determines that solar technologies are not appropriate for a construction or major renovation project”.

MEA maintains that *requiring* that all new school construction include rooftop solar installations is the better course of action, unless a local school board can demonstrate an actual impediment to the effective generation of electricity using a solar photovoltaic installation.

On-site energy generation provides a myriad of benefits. Generating energy where it is used reduces the need for additional transmission and distribution investments, combining onsite generation with storage or other energy assets can make buildings, or even campuses, more resilient to catastrophic events, and the deployment of renewable energy helps us, as a State, reach our energy and environmental policy goals.

For the foregoing reasons, MEA urges the committee to *require* solar energy systems on newly constructed schools, and to issue a **favorable report as amended**.

SB0235 - House - Solar on Schools - Climate Parent

Uploaded by: Joseph Jakuta

Position: UNF

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: SB 0235 - "School Buildings – Solar and Geothermal Technology"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Oppose

Hearing Date: March 21, 2023



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to SB 0235, which concerns approaches for the Interagency on School Construction (IAC) to consider for solar and geothermal 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 and geothermal installation in 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. However, this bill does not lead us down the path.

Our first concern is with MD. Education Code Ann. § 5-319 (d), that the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) **MAY** adopt regulations. Admittedly it is probably more realistic since when the General Assembly enacted § 5-319 (a) as it currently exists the IAC was told that they **SHALL** enact regulations concerning solar on schools and have yet to finalize a rulemaking. Prior to that the Board of Public Works was responsible for finalizing regulations under Maryland law and they also do not appear to have issued any rulemakings to address solar reporting from schools. What would make the most sense is to leave the statute alone and hold the IAC accountable for the regulations they shall implement under the direction of the General Assembly.

The one positive direction being undertaken is that this bill does include requirements to examine geothermal in addition to solar. Geothermal heat pumps have been found to be a cost effective heating and cooling solution in nearly all of the new buildings that PGCPS is constructing and this is proving to be less expensive when long-term costs are considered and, of course, produces no on-site emissions, which is better for the health of the students and the planet.

Our second concern is the addition of MD. Education Code Ann. § 5-319 (b), that school construction cannot be held up if the evaluations are not done. This is short-sighted and will lead to long-term locking in of unevaluated decisions. LEAs will build schools without considering the federal and state tax rebates and other funding available to them for solar, net-zero, and geothermal and cost the taxpayers more in the long-term, and then there will be the costs to replace inappropriate heating and cooling systems to meet 2045 carbon reduction goals.

We can attest through our work with PGCPS that these requirements will lead our school construction to a better place for both the environment and the taxpayer. Letting the IAC and some LEAs off the hook for

requiring long-term evaluations of cost saving measures will cost Maryland taxpayers more in energy costs and result in costly retrofits to achieve the zero emission goals of the Climate Solutions Now Act.

Our tax dollars should be going towards education, not wasted energy and the IAC should be required to follow directions from the General Assembly under Maryland Law.

We encourage a report **OPPOSING** this legislation.