



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**.