



TESTIMONY FOR SB0235

School Buildings - Solar Technology - Solar Panels on Schools

Bill Sponsor: Senator West

Committee: Budget and Tax

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0235 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

With the passing of the School Construction legislation two years ago, projects for construction of new schools and upgrades for existing schools are suddenly flush with funding. Constructing a new school, or replacing the roof on an existing school without installing solar panels is absolutely foolish considering the incentives available, the projected increase in the cost of fossil fuels and the imperative to reduce greenhouse gasses. Additionally, it sends the wrong message to the youth of this state – that we can't act in our own best interest.

As far as incentives for installing solar panels, the Climate Solutions Now Act passed last session provides additional funds to build net zero schools which would require rooftop solar. 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.

The financial benefits of solar on school budgets due to the projected increase in fossil fuel costs over the long term are reason enough to invest in this technology. Additionally, solar can be used as a teaching opportunity for Career Technology Education students and students learning the sciences, which will help provide a workforce for the building decarbonization that we already are required to undertake.

Our members believe strongly that the state should encourage and enhance solar energy production and we believe that installing solar in schools is one way to do that. We also would like to encourage consideration of energy storage, which will make schools more resilient during power outages and help offset grid management issues with solar coming online. 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 available.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.