

---

HOUSE BILL 2297

---

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Representatives Orwall and Hackney

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.

--- END ---