

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on the Environment to hold hearings to examine the Solar Schools for Philadelphia report released by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group, and to investigate financing options for the School District of Philadelphia to use its land and building stock for solar energy generation.

WHEREAS, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center is a 501(c)(3) organization focused on protecting our environment and providing the people of Pennsylvania a voice in the environmental debate, drawing on more than 30 years of experience to combine independent research, practical ideas and effective educational campaigns to achieve meaningful environmental results for Pennsylvania's environment; and

WHEREAS, Frontier Group provides information and ideas to help citizens build a cleaner, healthier, fairer and more democratic America, addressing issues that will define our nation's course in the 21st century - from fracking to solar energy, global warming to transportation, clean water to clean elections - by delivering timely research and analysis that is accessible to the public, applying insights gleaned from a variety of disciplines to arrive at new ideas for solving pressing problems; and

WHEREAS, This March of 2016, PennEnvironment and Frontier Group together released the "Solar Schools for Philadelphia" report, reviewing the potential energy-generation capacity of roof-mounted solar panels on each of School District of Philadelphia school; and

WHEREAS, Solar Schools for Philadelphia models the potential for covering the 100 acres of rooftop space available on the 204 school buildings, which would result in the generation of 71 gigawatt-hours of electricity per year (the equivalent electricity usage of 7,000 average Pennsylvania homes, enough to provide 37% of schools' power needs); avert emission of 62,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide, the leading cause of global warming, along with that of other pollutants; provide potential net budgetary benefit of \$13 million to the School District, even without federal, state, or other incentives; and create significant local jobs installing and maintaining these systems, along with instructional and other benefits; and

WHEREAS, The report discusses two of the financing options: first, power purchase agreements, which are third-party ownership agreements allowing the partner to retain ownership of the solar panels, hold responsibility for their upkeep, sell electricity produced by the system to the buyer at a set price, but still access federal tax credits that would otherwise be unavailable, and second, tax-exempt lease purchase agreements, which let schools both purchase and own solar energy equipment while making low, tax-exempt interest payments, but without access to the federal incentives; and

WHEREAS, There are nearly 4,000 schools nationwide with photovoltaic installations, with nearly 500 megawatts (MW) of capacity (about as much capacity as the world's largest utility-scale solar PV plant) of which about 11 MW of capacity is generated by 41 schools in Pennsylvania - of which Albert Greenfield School, A. Philip Randolph Career and Technical High School and the private school Chestnut Hill Academy are in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Between 2011 and 2015, the City of Philadelphia contributed an additional \$376 million to the School District, even as the Commonwealth has both retained primary control and severely divested, despite increasing pension, charter and other costs mandated by state law, stressing the need for cost savings with the existing District budget; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby authorize the Committee on the Environment to hold hearings to examine the Solar Schools for Philadelphia report released by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group and to investigate financing options for the School District of Philadelphia to use its land and building stock for solar energy generation.