



**TESTIMONY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (PSBA)
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION,
TECHNOLOGY & UTILITIES**

**REGARDING HOUSE BILL 1032 (Fiedler) P.N. 1041 RELATING TO THE SOLAR FOR
SCHOOLS ACT**

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MAY 2, 2023

Good morning Chairman Matzie, Chairman Marshall and members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection, Technology & Utilities. Thank you for inviting the Pennsylvania School Boards Association to present testimony regarding House Bill 1032, proposing the establishment of the Solar for Schools Grant Program. PSBA commends the sponsor's commitment and leadership on this issue of cleaner and more affordable energy for our public schools. I am Kevin Buser, PSBA's Managing Director of Government Affairs and a former nine-year member of the Lower Dauphin School Board.

Throughout the Commonwealth, public school districts have been forced to endure increases in energy costs to heat and cool their buildings, prepare meals for students, or to simply keep their lights on so students can learn. This places school boards in difficult positions as they look towards increasing local taxes or diverting resources away from classrooms in order to cover rising energy costs.

Inefficient buildings are just one of the infrastructure challenges facing schools. In PSBA's most recent State of Education report, 71.4% of school districts reported at least one of their district's buildings were in need of major repair or replacement. When asked which areas of

their buildings were in need of repair or replacement, school leaders reported a wide variety of needed areas for improvement such as HVAC, windows and doors, and roofing. Interestingly, energy efficiency upgrades rounded out the top four reported areas of facility needs with a little more than half of respondents (50.8 %) citing energy efficiency upgrades as an area of needed improvements.

Despite the demonstrated wide-spread need for energy efficiency upgrades, many school districts simply lack the resources needed to make large scale upgrades in their school buildings. As found in PSBA's State of Education report, 50% of school districts reported that their district postponed construction and renovation projects due to a lack of state reimbursement in 2020. By 2023, that percentage had increased to 70%. With these funding barriers and the multitude of needs of our public school districts in mind, House Bill 1032 would provide the resources needed to get a solar project off the ground by providing a source of state funding for the study and installation of solar power in schools across the state.

It is our estimation that fewer than forty school districts across the Commonwealth have solar arrays fulfilling their clean energy needs. The minimal number of districts who have invested in solar panels is drastically low due to the lack of affordability of the solar panels. As seen during Solar4All schools tour of the Commonwealth and most recently in the Steelton-Highspire School District, their solar array has the potential to save approximately \$200,000 per year on electricity. These funds can then be re-allocated back into the classrooms or other components of the budget requiring more funding. The passage of House Bill 1032 would allow districts across the Commonwealth to have access to this more affordable source of clean energy.

Thank you again for allowing PSBA to testify here today and I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.