

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Linda Chinnia
Chair, Baltimore City Board
of School Commissioners

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Opposition of
House Bill 469
State-Funded Construction and Major Renovation Projects
Solar Panels – Requirements**

February 17, 2021

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners is supportive of solar panels, but have many concerns with House Bill 469. As written, this legislation has many challenging elements.

For renovated construction, the concern is the costs of the installation of the solar panels. When the IAC makes its allocations, there must a requirement to include in the overall funding provided the true and full cost of solar panels to be installed, including those costs associated with making changes to allow for the use of solar panels on renovated projects. Additionally, many school districts have low electrical rates and we would not want to see this compromised. There would also need to be assistance with creating and supporting power purchase agreements.

For renovation projects, the concern is that the bill defines a major renovation project as a project that is to be reconstructed, where the HVAC system will be replaced, and where the building will have a roof of 4,000 sf. However, for many major renovation projects, the roof structure itself isn't replaced. Pursuant to this legislation, now it would have to be included in a major renovation so that it could support the load of the panels, increased snow load, increased snow drift load, etc; this increases the scope and cost of most projects.

For renovation projects, the load would then need to carry down through the building, which means, all of the major load carrying elements down through the building would have to be increased down to the foundations. In addition, solar panels (quantity, efficiency) are affected by things like variable roof heights, roof equipment, etc. Again, on a major renovation project, the project doesn't typically do things like level out the roof to one main elevation. To install on a renovation projects, there would be a cost to level out the roofs so that solar panels could be used.

Another costs to installing solar panels is the electrical connection cost, that typically would not happen in a major renovation project. The cost of including many of these additional elements would add such a substantial cost to the building that requiring this of major renovations will actually most likely eliminate the ability for districts to do major renovations, and every project would end up as a replacement, thus reducing the number of systemic and other major projects school districts could tackle each year.

Again, the Baltimore City School system supports solar panels, but thinks it only works best on new construction projects so all of the mentioned elements above can be considered and costed out effectively. In renovations projects, the use of solar panels, while an admirable goal and is something that districts could strive toward, it becomes difficult and costly. If the IAC and the State provided additional school construction funds that would allow the school districts to cover all of the additional costs associated with the installation of the solar panels, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners could potentially support such legislation.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opposes House Bill 469 and urges an unfavorable report.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.
Director, Legislative and Government Affairs
dsterrette@bcps.k12.md.us
443-250-0190

Melissa Broome
Director, Policy and Legislative Affairs
mcbroome@bcps.k12.md.us
443-525-3038