



SOLAR ENERGY FOR SCHOOLS

SUMMARY:

Schools can reduce and stabilize energy costs by switching to solar while concurrently providing real-world STEAM learning opportunities and reducing fossil fuel pollution. The number of Virginia schools embracing solar power has tripled from 29 schools to 86 schools over the past two years and the capacity installed increased from 1.9 MW to 20.1 MW.

At least 90% of the solar projects installed on or near Virginia schools involve a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) because these agreements allow schools to have little to no upfront investment and pay lower rates for electricity.

In 2013, Senate Bill 1023 placed an overall limit of 50 MW on solar projects installed in Dominion territory using third-party PPAs. Currently, 80% of the pilot program's capacity is filled and more than 80% of those solar installations are for K-12 public schools. In 2017, House Bill 2390 allowed PPAs for Appalachian Power's service territory, but it exempts public schools from participating in their renewable energy program. In 2019, House Bill 2547 allowed schools participating in electric energy cooperatives to use PPAs, however, there are other capacity limits. Legislative action is needed to allow schools across the Commonwealth to pursue cleaner, cheaper energy generation.

WHEREAS, schools across Virginia are switching to solar because of significant cost savings, the opportunity for students to learn about renewable energy, and positive environmental impacts; and

WHEREAS, School districts generally sign contracts called Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with a developer who installs, owns and maintains the solar systems thus allowing the school system to purchase only the power that is consumed [from the developer], which is typically a lower electricity rate than what the utility company would charge; and

WHEREAS, The state's investor-owned utilities (Dominion and Appalachian Power) and electric cooperatives have limits on net metering* and on school districts' ability to use Power Purchase Agreements;

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Virginia PTA urges the General Assembly to pass legislation that removes net metering limits and barriers that limit school district's use of Power Purchase Agreements to ensure equal access to clean energy solutions for all schools in the state.

RESOLVED, that the Virginia PTA requests that the General Assembly amend the Virginia Code to direct the Board of Education to create curriculum guidelines that aligns with the Standards of Learning and support hands-on lessons about solar energy.

RESOLVED, that the Virginia PTA support grant and funding incentive programs that enable school districts to shift to clean energy.

* Net metering is the policy that allows people with solar to get a credit on their electric bill for the energy they produce from their system.

January 25, 2020, Adopted by the Virginia PTA 2020 Annual Meeting Attendees