

## *An Act Relative to Healthy and Sustainable Schools*

*H.3691 / S.2127*

*Filed by Representative Marjorie Decker & Senator Paul Feeney*

### **Bill Summary:**

This legislation would establish a statewide goal to decarbonize public schools, public universities, and community colleges by mandating energy audits. The bill creates a Healthy and Sustainable Schools Office that will be responsible for conducting energy audits and will provide technical and financial support to schools installing renewable energy systems and completing energy efficiency projects. Schools located in environmental justice communities will receive priority for energy audits and energy efficiency improvements.

The proposed legislation will do the following:

- **Establish a statewide goal to decarbonize public schools, public universities, and community colleges.**
  - Based on current energy consumption after deep retrofits, K-12 public schools, community colleges, and public universities would need to install a total of around 1.3 GW or 1,300 MW to sustain their energy consumption.
  
- **Require energy audits for public schools, public universities, and community colleges.**
  - Assessments will include a report that estimate the costs, savings, and greenhouse gas reduction from implementing energy efficiency improvements and installing renewable energy systems located on or nearby schools' premises.
  - Renewable energy systems can include but are not limited to geothermal, solar, and wind.
  - Schools located in environmental justice communities will receive priority for energy audits.
  
- **Create a Healthy and Sustainable Schools Office within the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs that will provide energy audits and facilitate energy efficiency upgrades at public schools, public universities, and community colleges.**

**The department will:**

  - Employ a staff of engineers, policy analysts, financial experts, community liaisons, and other experts as necessary to perform its responsibilities.
  - Have the authority to implement recommended renewable energy installations and energy efficiency improvements at schools.
    - Create efficiencies by aggregating projects in order to negotiate bulk purchasing of renewable and energy efficiency equipment, feasibility studies, and installation services.
  - Enforce responsible contracting requirements by ensuring contractors and subcontractors:
    - Utilize apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training programs to create career pathways

- Pay employees no less than prevailing wage and fringe benefits rate prescribed in the state’s prevailing wage law
  - Comply with all federal, state, and local laws governing employment
  - Prioritize hiring residents from environmental justice communities and members of historically marginalized communities
  - Comply with all state and local hiring goals for women, minorities, and veterans
  - Become signatory to a project labor agreement (PLA) if a PLA selected as the project delivery method for the construction project by the contracting authority
  - Disclose and certify they are in compliance with anti-discrimination laws; wage & hour and employee misclassification laws; post a wage bond in the event of past employment law violations; and provide disclosures concerning their efforts to maintain labor harmony and advance diversity on past projects.
  
- **Dedicate a budget to financing energy audits and installing energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy systems at public schools, public universities, and community colleges.** The fund may consist of various sources of local and federal funding including but not limited to the following sources:
  - Funding from state agencies, state bonds, and/or funding generated from the MA Fair Share Amendment
  - Funding from federal sources such as:
    - The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (“GGRF”) at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
      - Funding from the GGRF’s \$7 billion zero-emission technology program to provide grants for feasibility studies in low-income and disadvantaged communities.
      - Partnering with green banks that are eligible to receive funding from the GGRF’s \$20 billion green financing program to provide loans for solar and energy efficiency projects.
    - The remainder of the American Rescue Plan Act funds for elementary and secondary school emergency relief.
    - The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act’s State and Community Energy Program at the Department of Energy that is providing \$500 million in grants for energy improvements at public schools.
    - The Inflation Reduction Act funds providing \$50 million to address air pollution at schools in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

**For questions please contact Lindsay Kenney of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO at [lkenney@massaflcio.org](mailto:lkenney@massaflcio.org)**