



Board of Education

Office of the Board
1 North Dearborn Street
Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60602

Board Report

25-0626-RS7

Agenda Date: 6/26/2025

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING HEALTHY GREEN SCHOOLS, GOOD JOBS, BRIGHT FUTURES: PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC SECURITY OF CHICAGO'S SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS, the Board of Education recognizes that Chicago Public Schools can fulfill its educational mission only when students and staff are provided with reliably safe, healthful, and supportive learning environments; and

WHEREAS, CPS' 2024-2029 "Together We Rise" 5-Year Strategic Plan outlines one of the strategies to having 21st Century Learning Environments as "collaboratively advocate for and continue to seek consistent capital funding from public and private sources to support critical facility needs, program enhancements, healthy green schools, and renewable energy solutions"; and

WHEREAS, Chicago Public Schools' commitment to equity requires attention to environmental racism and climate justice, both of which recognize the unequal effects of climate change and environmental damage on the basis of race, poverty, gender, and geography; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education seeks to reaffirm its commitment to protect communities most harmed by environmental racism and climate change; and

WHEREAS, clean energy projects such as rooftop solar and heat pumps can create healthier and safer learning environments for Chicago's students, make CPS buildings more resilient in the face of extreme weather events, and create savings on energy and maintenance costs which can be reinvested into other critical needs; and

WHEREAS, the expansion of clean energy projects builds off the work CPS has already done to become the first school district to earn a Gold Certification under the Healthy Green Schools & Colleges Standard; and

WHEREAS, CPS has been investing in energy efficiency measures, including the replacement of existing equipment with energy-efficient equipment, replacement of steam heating systems with hydronic systems, lighting controls, replacement or addition of Building Automation Systems (BAS) for more efficient systems operations heat pumps, replacement of existing roof-mounted equipment with energy-efficient equipment, improved roof reflectance and energy efficiency resulting from a water and airtight roofing envelope system, which we can build on to further invest in energy savings through clean energy investments,

WHEREAS, through the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), Chicago Public Schools has received Public Schools Carbon-Free Assessments demonstrating the potential for individual schools to save millions of dollars through solar projects; and

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois has committed to achieving a carbon-free power grid by 2045 and 100% clean energy by 2050, per the CEJA, and Chicago Public Schools has a key role to play in this energy transition; and

WHEREAS, the demand for workers and leaders with skills and knowledge pertaining to climate and sustainability is growing, and the K-12 education system can prepare students for careers in emerging and expanding fields such as renewable energy; and

WHEREAS, a combination of both State and Federal financial incentives exist to help public schools transition to a clean energy economy in an environmentally just and equitable way; and

WHEREAS, these clean energy technologies can be both more affordable to install and operate over the technology's lifespan; and

WHEREAS, timing is of the essence in investing in cost-saving clean energy technologies;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chicago Board of Education directs CPS to:

- 1. Create a Healthy Green Schools Pilot Program** - CPS shall aim to invest in at least 12 clean energy and building electrification projects by the end of FY 2026, including but not limited to rooftop solar, geothermal systems, and heat pumps. Projects shall be slated for neighborhood schools located in Environmental Justice communities as defined by either the Illinois Solar for All EJ Map or the CEJA Illinois Map. The Pilot Program shall inform the development of a district wide approach to building decarbonization.
- 2. Ensure Net Savings** - Projects shall leverage State and Federal incentives (Renewable Energy Credits, Direct Pay Tax Credits) to create net savings over the project's lifespan. The design process related to the pilot program shall require bidders to calculate the net cost or savings to the Board for the lifespan of the clean energy system. For clean energy HVAC savings, net savings will be compared against the cost of replacing existing gas-powered systems.
- 3. Reinvest Energy Savings in Healthy School Improvements** - CPS shall set up a Healthy Green Schools Fund in order to ensure any ongoing incentive checks (including renewable energy credits), tax credits, or federal/state funding resulting from energy efficiency projects are reinvested in building improvements for schools in Environmental Justice communities as defined in #1. Building improvements shall include projects that protect student health, such as installing filtered water fountains to remove lead and other toxins from drinking water, building repairs to address issues related to water damage, and remediating mold, lead paint, and asbestos.
- 4. Support Educational Programming around Sustainability and Green Construction at Pilot Sites** - CPS shall use local, building and construction trades union labor to complete projects and partner with teachers, counselors, students, and unions to support curriculum development and Career-Connecting Learning programming that can prepare students for careers in environmentally focused, emerging and expanding fields such as renewable energy.
- 5. Partner with Community-Based Environmental Justice Organizations to Inform Pilot Project Design** - CPS shall reaffirm its commitment to Environmental Justice communities through collaboration in the implementation of the Pilot Program.
- 6. Transparent Implementation** - CPS staff shall report back to the Board of Education on the implementation plan for the pilot program on a quarterly basis with the first report given within 120 days of passage of the FY 2026 Capital Budget.