

My name is Nethra Purushothaman and I am a middle schooler, and this is my written testimony.

In the 2023 Virginia General Assembly session, I would like to see the following happen:

Pass House Bill 1852: Public school buildings & facilities; construction & renovation, renewable energy generation facility

HB1852 directs the Commission on School Construction and Modernization, in consultation with the Department of Energy, to develop and make recommendations on strategies to assist interested school divisions with incorporating renewable energy generation facilities in the construction or renovation of school buildings. The bill requires the Commission to report the recommendations to the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations no later than November 1, 2023.

This bill will give school divisions a *better* opportunity to acquire renewable energy. It will add educational benefits and allow students to have access to the real-world technologies that will be part of their future.

It also can provide an opportunity for those that want a hands-on career installing solar which is a growing trade. But, most importantly, it will save schools precious funds. Money that can be used to increase teacher wages, improve school curriculum and help underserved students and communities.

Middlesex County in south-eastern Virginia is a rural, *conservative* community, who originally perceived solar energy as too expensive. However, they ended up installing solar panels on 3 of their public school facilities and will save **\$4.74 million** over the 25-year life span of these systems.

Hanover County, Virginia installed solar panels on 4 schools which saved the county **\$202,000** between the years 2020-2022 due to rising standard electricity costs. Renewable energy prices are plummeting and savings are increasing dramatically. This is the future of energy.

In Louisa County, Virginia, solar-powered wi-fi stations helped the 40% of students without reliable internet access, to connect online during the pandemic. Louisa County is expected to save **\$8 million** through its solar systems, and with spiked energy costs in 2021 they already

saved **\$4,000 within 6 months**. These savings are being used to add new academic programs and maintain existing ones.

Schools are struggling to pay their bills, and teachers are advocating for collective bargaining. At a time when prices at the gas pump are skyrocketing and oil and gas are becoming increasingly expensive day by day this is a chance to save Virginians and tax payers money.

In 2022, weather disasters have cost the U.S. at least \$165 billion not including the snowstorms in late December. More and more people are experiencing blackouts and damage from severe weather, which is leaving more people without electricity and heat for prolonged periods of time.

Schools are not only learning environments, they are also community spaces and serve many other needs. They need to be resilient and cost effective - both of which can be met by assisting schools in acquiring renewable energy systems.

Sources:

[New York Times: Solar Energy School Funding](#)

[Richmond News: VA Schools Utilize Solar Energy](#)