



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 20-2567, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

ESTABLISHING THE COOK COUNTY K-12 SOLAR SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, Cook County supports the use of electricity from renewable sources instead of fossil fuels as part of its overall goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Policy Roadmap's ("Roadmap") Sustainable Communities goal is to support healthy, resilient communities that thrive economically, socially, and environmentally; and

WHEREAS, the Roadmap acknowledges the County must address past environmental injustices in underserved communities including the effects of climate change, uneven development, and persistent segregation; and

WHEREAS, the Roadmap sets forth the objective of ensuring environmental justice and a healthy environment for all people and places and advancing racial equity; and

WHEREAS, the Roadmap also sets forth the objective of reducing climate change and providing ways to mitigate its effects by prioritizing renewable energy development; and

WHEREAS, on November 21, 2019, the Cook County Board of Commissioners approved the 2020 Annual Appropriation which included Budget Amendment 13 ("Amendment"), as passed by the Finance Committee and the County Board, to use \$120,000 in funds from the Solid Waste Special Purpose Fund to create a program that would provide up to two schools with solar paneled roofs; and

WHEREAS, the Amendment provides that the participating schools would build a science, technology, engineering and mathematics ("STEM") program around the solar paneled roofs to encourage more children to join engineering, environmental sciences, and other STEM programs; and

WHEREAS, the Amendment provides that the solar panels will provide an educational component by allowing students to track the energy generated and saved as a result of the solar panels, while providing a cost savings for the participating schools; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation's ("Foundation") K-12 Solar Schools Program ("Program") supports the installation of 1 kW photovoltaic (PV) systems throughout Illinois at institutions serving grades K-12; and

WHEREAS, the Foundation's Program was launched in 2006 and has awarded over \$5 million in grants to over 400 schools to support the installation of 1 kW photovoltaic (PV) systems; and

WHEREAS, the Foundation's Program turns school buildings into hands-on science experiments, helping teachers to instruct students about STEM, science, math, technology, the environment, and other important topics; and

WHEREAS, the County seeks to reach more students and schools; and

WHEREAS, the County desires to increase access for students in low-income communities which disproportionately lack access to STEM programs; and

WHEREAS, the County desires to support under-resourced schools which lack the resources to incorporate clean energy into their operations and curriculum; and

WHEREAS, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 authorizes financial assistance through its Title 1 school-wide program to local educational institutions with a percentage of students from low-income families of at least 40%; and

WHEREAS, the County seeks to support schools applying for Foundation grants for the installation of solar photovoltaic panels by developing a Cook County K-12 School Solar Initiative (“County’s School Solar Initiative”) that expands the number of schools with a preference for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title-1 school-wide funded and Title-1 school-wide eligible schools (“Title 1 Schools”); and

WHEREAS, the Foundation’s Program funds approximately 90% of the PV system and installation costs at schools whose applications are accepted by the Foundation; and

WHEREAS, the County desires to create a School Solar Initiative that will fund the remaining portion of the PV system costs, ongoing operation and maintenance, and STEM curriculum development not to exceed \$5,000 per school; and

WHEREAS, the County’s School Solar Initiative also seeks to fund up to \$5,000 to existing Foundation Program schools that received grants and that lack the resources to repair and maintain PV systems that are currently inoperable.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Cook County Board of Commissioners, that the \$120,000 appropriated to the Department of Environment and Sustainability for a County School Solar Initiative shall be used to provide funding to K-12 public schools with a portion of funds for a PV system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Environment and Sustainability shall:

- (1) Establish, develop, maintain and promote the Cook County K-12 School Solar Initiative (“Initiative”); and
- (2) Be authorized to develop the Cook County School Solar Initiative and to enter into grant agreements with schools which receive grants under the foundation’s program, with a preference for Title 1 schools; and
- (3) Be authorized to award grants to provide additional funding under the County School Solar Initiative for: the school’s PV system match costs not covered by the Foundation’s Program; the establishment of an operating and maintenance fund as required by the Foundation; and the support of student STEM curriculum development and related student and community educational materials and events, with the total grant amount for any one school not to exceed \$5,000; and
- (4) Be authorized to enter into grant agreements with public schools within Cook County that are awarded grants from the Foundation’s Program, with a preference for Title 1 schools, based on the order in which qualifying applications are received; and
- (5) Thereafter, if sufficient funds remain, be authorized to enter into grant agreements with any public school within Cook County that is awarded a grant from the Foundation’s program, based on the order in which qualifying applications are received; and
- (6) In addition, the Department may offer funding to public schools, with a preference for Title 1 schools, in Cook County already within the Foundation’s K-12 Solar Schools Program towards the cost of repair of previously installed PV systems funded by the Foundation, in an amount not to exceed \$5,000 per school; and

(7) Report in writing annually no later than the last Cook County Board meeting in September to the Cook County Board of Commissioners regarding the grants awarded under the County School Solar Initiative.

Effective date: This resolution shall be in effect immediately upon adoption.