

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2612 (Schultz) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee:	Housing and Community Development	Vote:	12 - 0
	Utilities and Energy		18 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC), beginning with the first triennial addition of the building code adopted after January 1, 2031, to adopt building energy standards for building electrical circuit features to enable a qualified plug-in photovoltaic (PV) system to function as an energy source within the electrical circuit of single-family residential dwelling, multiunit residential dwelling, or nonresidential development.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Authorizes CBSC, beginning with the first triennial addition of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations) adopted after January 1, 2031, to adopt, approve, codify, and publish building energy standards for building electrical circuit features to enable a qualified plug-in PV system to function as an energy source within the electrical circuit of a single-family residential dwelling, multi-unit residential dwelling, or nonresidential development constructed after the adoption of the first triennial edition of the California Building Standards Code after June 1, 2031.
- 2) For purposes of the authorization above, requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to research, develop, and propose for adoption building standards for a qualified plug-in PV system to function as described above.
- 3) Requires CBSC and HCD to take specified actions while developing the building standards, including, among other items, consulting with the California Energy Commission and other stakeholders, inviting the participation of the public at large, and proposing new standards and circuit design features that allow a qualified plug-in PV system to meet specified conditions.
- 4) Defines “qualified plug-in PV system” to mean a device that (a) is designed to be connected to a building’s electrical system through a standard electrical outlet, (b) is intended to offset the customer’s on-site electricity consumption, (c) meets the standards of the most recent version of the National Electrical Code, as specified, and (d) is certified as a plug-in PV system by the Underwriters Laboratories as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CBSC, within the Department of General Services (DGS), indicates, because it lacks the authority and expertise for this type of building standard, it would incur costs of \$521,000 to

hire a two-year limited-term electrical engineer to research, develop, and propose the subject standards during fiscal years (FYs) 2032-33 and 2033-34 (DGS Service Revolving Fund).

CBSC notes the necessity of using the DGS Service Revolving Fund for the limited-term electrical engineer results in a corresponding increase to the total amount state agencies would need to pay as their proportionate share of the fund during FYs 2032-33 and 2033-34. In this way this bill also has an unknown fiscal impact to the State Fire Marshal, Office of Statewide Hospital Planning and Development, Division of the State Architect, Energy Commission, and other proposing and adopting agencies during those fiscal years.

- 2) HCD estimates ongoing General Fund costs of \$597,000 for three analyst positions to propose a new process to meet the bill's requirements, incorporate the new building standards into the general process and coordinate with CBSC on various matters.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

[This bill] aims to expand access to affordable solar energy for Californians who have historically been excluded from rooftop solar benefits — particularly renters, apartment dwellers, and low-income households. The bill directs the CBSC to develop and adopt mandatory building standards that would allow portable, plug-in solar generation devices (small solar panels that connect directly to a standard electrical outlet) to safely function as an energy source within residential and nonresidential electrical systems. By establishing safety certifications and circuit standards for these devices, the bill seeks to give renters and multifamily residents a practical, low-cost way to generate their own clean energy onsite, reduce their electricity bills, and improve energy resilience — without requiring the permanent rooftop solar installations that have long been out of reach for non-homeowners.

- 2) **Background. *Building Standards.*** The California Building Standards Law establishes the process for adopting state building standards by the California Building Standard Commission (CBSC). There are approximately 20 state agencies that develop building standards and propose them for adoption to the CBSC, most commonly HCD, the State Fire Marshall, and the Division of the State Architect. The CBSC publishes the approved building standards in the California Building Standards Code.

California's Building Standards Code has multiple parts. Each covers a different discipline, such as mechanical, plumbing, electrical, energy, or fire, and each part has both a proposing agency and an adopting agency. The proposal in this bill falls under California Electrical Code. Under this section and specifically for residential electrical standards, HCD is the proposing agency. Other agencies, such as the CEC, may participate in an advisory capacity.

Recent legislation delayed any adoption of new building codes (with some exceptions) until June 1, 2031, for residential units. Development of relevant building codes for nonresidential

units remains ongoing. For example, the CEC adopts new building energy efficiency standards every three years, and standards become effective one year after their adoption. The 2025 Energy Codes went into effect January 1, 2026, and the CEC is already in development on their 2028 Energy Codes

This bill requires HCD to research and propose mandatory building standards for newly constructed single-family and multi-family housing for “qualified plug-in photovoltaic systems” that can be plugged into a standard outlet.

Plug-in PV Systems. Plug-in solar PV systems are small, portable solar panels, typically under two kilowatts that can be plugged directly into a wall outlet to offset a portion of a household’s energy consumption. These devices have become popular in Europe and are gaining popularity in the United States as simple, inexpensive options for reducing energy costs. Plug-in photovoltaic systems can be mounted on fences or on balconies and can be moved from one residence to the next, an attractive option for renters. These systems do not power an entire house like rooftop solar but can be used like energy efficient appliances.

There are a number of safety concerns surrounding plug-in solar products in the U.S. This bill allows new building electrical codes to be established for plug-in solar systems to safely function as an energy source by ensuring compatibility with electrical circuits.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** SB 868 (Weiner), of this legislative session, exempts portable solar devices, as defined, from state law and electric utility rules regarding requirements to connect to the electrical distribution system, known as interconnection. SB 868 is pending in Senate Appropriations Committee.

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