
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2612 (Schultz) - Building standards: qualified plug-in photovoltaic systems

Version: June 29, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: HOUSING 10 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Mark McKenzie

Bill Summary: AB 2612 would require the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to research, develop, and propose for adoption by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC), standards for a qualified plug-in photovoltaic system to function as an energy source within the electrical circuit of a single-family residential dwelling, multiunit residential dwelling, or nonresidential development. The bill would authorize the CBSC to adopt, approve, codify, and publish specified standards for applicable building electrical circuit features, commencing with the first triennial edition of the California Building Standards Code adopted after June 1, 2031, as specified.

Fiscal Impact:

- HCD estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$597,000 annually for 3.0 PY of analyst staff to consult with specified interested parties, including participation from the public at large, and research, develop, and propose building standards to the CBSC for adoption in the next triennial edition of the Building Standards Code after June 1, 2031. Staff estimates that this workload could likely be accomplished over three years with limited-term staff, rather than permanent positions, beginning in 2028-29. (General Fund)
- The CBSC estimates costs of \$257,000 in 2032-33 and \$264,000 in 2033-34 for 1.0 PY two-year limited term staff (Electrical Engineer) to research, develop, and propose for adoption the specified building standards, including: participation in the specified consultation and public meeting requirements, coordinating technical and safety electrical standards with relevant state agencies; preparing technical rational, studies, and cost benefit analyses; developing training and education materials; and responding to technical inquiries. (Building Standard Administration Special Revolving Fund, DGS Service Revolving Fund)
- Unknown, likely minor costs for the California Energy Commission to consult with HCD and the CBSC in an advisory capacity. (Energy Resources Program Account)

Background: Existing law, the California Building Standards Law, authorizes the CBSC to approve and adopt building standards through a triennial rulemaking process to revise and update the California Building Standards Code. There are approximately twenty state agencies that develop building standards for submittal to the CBSC for review, approval, and adoption. HCD is responsible for proposing building standards to the BSC for residential buildings, including hotels, motels, lodging houses, apartment houses, dwellings, buildings and structures. HCD is also the proposing agency for residential electric standards that are published in the California Electric Code section of

the Building Standards Code, but the California Energy Commission may participate in an advisory capacity. In the absence of a designated state agency, the CBSC is required to adopt specific building standards, as prescribed. Building standards take effect 180 days after they are published, unless a different date is specified. The most recent update to the California Building Standards Code, the 2025 Triennial Edition, is in effect from January 1, 2026 until December 31, 2028.

Plug-in solar, small photovoltaic systems are small, portable solar panels, typically under 2 kilowatts that can be plugged directly into a wall outlet to offset a portion of a households 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, which makes them an attractive option for renters. These systems do not power an entire house like rooftop solar but can be utilized to offset household energy consumption and reduce costs.

Proposed Law: AB 2612 would require HCD to research, develop, and propose for adoption building standards for a qualified plug-in photovoltaic system to function as an energy source within the electrical circuit of a single-family residential dwelling, multiunit residential dwelling, or nonresidential development that is constructed after the adoption of the first triennial edition of the Building Standards Code after June 1, 2031.

The bill would also authorize the CBSC, commencing with the first triennial edition of the Building Standards Code adopted after June 1, 2031, to adopt, approve, codify, and publish applicable building energy standards for building electrical circuit features to enable a qualified plug-in photovoltaic system to function as an energy source, as specified, for structures constructed after the adoption of the Building Standards Cod after June 1, 2031.

The bill would require HCD and the CBSC to do all of the following, relative to the adoption and publication of the specified standards:

- Consult with interested parties, including, the CEC, electrical safety standard setting bodies, photovoltaic and battery equipment manufacturers, commercial building and apartment owners, and the building industry.
- Invite the participation of the public at large in the development of those building standards through open consensus-based processes.
- Propose new construction building electrical standards that allow a qualified plug-in photovoltaic system with appropriate grid protective functions and rapid shutdown features to function as an energy source for a building's electrical circuit by connecting to a standard alternating current electrical outlet.
- Propose building circuit design features to allow a qualified plug-in photovoltaic system to provide limited backup power functions during outages.

For purposes of this bill, a “qualified plug-in photovoltaic system” is defined as a device that meets all of the following conditions:

- It is designed to be connected to a building's electrical system through a standard electrical outlet.
- It is intended to offset the customer's on-site electricity consumption.

- It meets the standards of the most recent version of the National Electrical Code, as published by the National Fire Protection Association, and of the California Electrical Code, as specified.
- It is certified as a plug-in photovoltaic system, as specified, to function as a plug-in energy source to a building's electrical system with safety features to prevent fire and electrical hazards.

Related Legislation: SB 868 (Wiener), which is currently pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, would exempt portable solar devices from state law and electric utility rules regarding requirements to connect to the electrical distribution system, otherwise known as interconnection.

AB 130 (Budget Committee), Chap. 22/2025, included provisions to impose a six-year moratorium on the proposal or adoption of new state building standards and modifications to building standards affecting residential units (new and existing) until June 1, 2031.

Staff Comments: This bill is intended to establish safety standards for the installation and operation of portable, plug-in photovoltaic devices that can connect directly to an electrical outlet. According to the author, "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."

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