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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

**Senator Blakespear, Chair**

**2025 - 2026 Regular**

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**Bill No:** SB 1398  
**Author:** Rubio  
**Version:** 3/25/2026  
**Urgency:** No  
**Consultant:** Brynn Cook

**Hearing Date:** 4/22/2026  
**Fiscal:** Yes

**SUBJECT:** State agencies: building and renovation projects: Green Globes certification

**DIGEST:** This bill authorizes state agencies to use the Green Globes certification as an alternative to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) to meet green building requirements.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law, under Government code (GOV) § 8316:

- 1) Requires all new buildings and major renovation projects undertaken by state agencies larger than 10,000 gross square feet, and for which the project schematic design documents are initiated by the state agency on or after January 1, 2024, to obtain the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold or higher certification, except as provided.
- 2) Requires state agencies to obtain LEED Silver certification for new buildings or major renovations if the state agency makes a finding that achieving LEED Gold conflicts with critical operational or security requirements, is demonstrably cost ineffective, or conflicts with California Building Code requirements.
- 3) Defines “LEED” to mean the Leadership and Environmental Design building certification program under the auspices of the United States Green Building Council.
- 4) Defines “major renovation” to mean a renovation of a structure in which most of the major building systems are either replaced or upgraded.
- 5) Provides that a “state agency” does not include a district agricultural association, as specified

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes a state agency undertaking a new building or major renovation project, as an alternative to obtaining LEED Gold certification, to obtain Three Green Globes or higher certification, as specified.
- 2) Authorizes, as an alternative to obtaining LEED Silver, state agency building or renovation projects to obtain Two Green Globes certification, as specified.
- 3) Specifies that this bill applies to projects for which the project schematic design documents are initiated by the state agency on or after January 1, 2027.
- 4) Defines “Green Globes” to mean the certification program under the auspices of the Green Building Initiative.

## Background

- 1) *California State Buildings Go Green.* In 2012, Executive Order B-18-12 included a requirement that any proposed new or major renovation of State buildings larger than 10,000 square feet obtain LEED Silver certification or higher. Additionally, the EO required state agencies to reduce overall water use at the facilities they operate by 10% by 2015 and by 20% by 2020, as measured against a 2010 baseline. The Department of General Services was tasked to develop policies and guidelines for the operation and maintenance of State buildings to achieve operating efficiency improvements and water and resource conservation.

In 2023, Legislation updated this law to make the LEED requirements for state buildings more stringent: under SB 416 (Laird, Chapter 395, Statutes of 2023), all new buildings or major renovation projects undertaken by a state agency were required to obtain the LEED Gold or higher certification, except as provided

- 2) *LEED and Green Globes.* According to the United States Green Building Council’s (GBC’s) internet website, “LEED-certified buildings save money, improve efficiency, lower carbon emissions and create healthier places for people. They are critical to addressing climate change and meeting [environmental, social, and governance] goals, enhancing resilience, and supporting more equitable communities. LEED categories can also contribute toward meeting the U.N.’s Sustainable Development Goals.”

To achieve LEED certification, a project earns points by adhering to the prerequisites and credits that address carbon, energy, water, waste, transportation, materials, health, and indoor environmental quality. The LEED

rating system has nine different credit categories from which project teams can obtain points for certification including: integrative process, location and transportation, sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, innovation, and regional priority. Projects go through a verification and review process and are awarded points that correspond to a level of LEED certification: Certified (40-49 points), Silver (50-59 points), Gold (60-79 points), and Platinum (80+ points). LEED uses a 110-point scale in total.

LEED certification is handled by two related – but distinct – organizations. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) develops and maintains the LEED rating system, including the standards, credits, and updates; and Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI) is responsible for review of the project documentation, verifying compliance, and awarding LEED certification levels.

The Green Globes certification is administered by The Green Building Initiative which owns, develops, and certifies the Green Globes rating system. Unlike LEED (which splits standards and certification across two organizations), Green Building Initiative does both. Under this system, projects complete an online assessment, then work with a Green Globes Initiative-approved third-party assessor who reviews documentation, conducts a site visit, and validates the score.

Green Globes only has seven different categories from which points are obtained including: site, energy, water, emissions, project management, indoor environment, and materials and resources. Green Globes uses a 1,000-point scale, and has four tiers of sustainability. In order to achieve the most basic level of certification and earn one Green Globe, a project team needs to earn at least 35%-54% of the total 1,000 points. In order to obtain two Green Globes, a project team will need to earn between 55%-69% of the total 1,000 points. To obtain three Green Globes, a project team will need to earn up to 70%-84% of the total 1,000 points and to achieve the highest level of Green Globes certification, earning four Green Globes, a project team will need to earn over 85% of the 1,000 available points.

## Comments

- 1) *Purpose of Bill.* According to the author, “SB 1398 updates California law to recognize additional equivalent green building certifications, such as Green Globes, for state infrastructure projects. This change will provide the Department of General Services (DGS) with greater flexibility to select the certification system that is most appropriate and cost-effective for each project,

while still maintaining strong sustainability standards. By explicitly authorizing additional certification options in statute, SB 1398 will help reduce unnecessary costs, avoid delays, and promote greater efficiency in the delivery of state infrastructure projects.

“In addition, broader recognition of Green Globes in California can support sustainability efforts beyond state government, including in multifamily housing, commercial development, academic facilities, data centers, and other building sectors.”

- 2) *LEED vs. Green Globes*. This bill proposes to allow Green Globes certification to be used as an equivalent for LEED certification in meeting green building goals for the State. Is Green Globes a good equivalent to LEED in terms of establishing rigorous sustainability goals? Green Globes offers a more flexible approach than LEED, in that it allows partial credits and recognizes that some criteria may not be applicable (and leaves those inapplicable criteria out of the scoring rubric). This approach seems fair: however, it would also make it easier for projects in the Green Globes system to get higher scores than if the same project went through LEED –in this way, a 4 Globe product may not be the full equivalent of a LEED Platinum.

On the other hand, Green Globes uses a life cycle assessment and multiple attribute evaluations, whereas LEED does not use this; life cycle assessments, when done well, can provide a more holistic view of the overall consumption of a project.

Ultimately, it seems that the arguments that Green Globes is more flexible, faster, and more interactive than LEED certification, while LEED may, in some cases, be more rigorous, seem accurate.

On balance, creating the option for DGS to use either Green Globes or LEED certification may give the agency flexibility in achieving overall sustainability goals.

## **DOUBLE REFERRAL:**

This measure was heard in Senate Governmental Organization Committee on April 14, 2026, and passed out of committee with a vote of 15-0.

## **Related/Prior Legislation**

SB 416 (Laird, Chapter 395, Statutes of 2023) requires any new building or major renovation project undertaken by a state agency on or after January 1, 2024, to obtain LEED Gold or higher certification, except as provided.

AB 38 (Lee, 2023) would have required a state agency to ensure newly installed outdoor lighting fixtures on state-owned, -leased, or -managed structures meet specified requirements with the goal of minimizing energy use and light pollution and preserving the natural night environment. (Held on the Senate Appropriations Suspense File)

SB 30 (Cortese, 2021) among other things, would have prohibited state agencies from designing or constructing state facilities connected to the natural gas grid, as specified. (Never heard in the Senate Governmental Organization Committee)

**SOURCE:** Green Building Initiative

**SUPPORT:**

American Subcontractors Association-california  
Building Owners and Managers Association of California  
California Building Industry Association  
California Business Properties Association  
California Sheet Metal & Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association  
Green Building Initiative  
Iapmo Group

**OPPOSITION:**

U.s. Green Building Council

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