

THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1398
Author: Rubio (D)
Amended: 3/25/26
Vote: 21

SENATE GOVERNMENTAL ORG. COMMITTEE: 15-0, 4/14/26

AYES: Rubio, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Ashby, Blakespear, Cervantes, Choi, Dahle, Hurtado, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Richardson, Smallwood-Cuevas, Wahab, Weber Pierson

SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE: 7-0, 4/22/26

AYES: Blakespear, Valladares, Allen, Dahle, Gonzalez, Hurtado, Menjivar

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

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

SOURCE: Green Building Initiative

DIGEST: This bill additionally authorizes a state agency undertaking a new building or major renovation project to obtain Green Globes certification, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 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.

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

Author Statement. According to the author’s office, “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.

Additionally, “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.”

Executive Order B-18-12. Executive Order (EO) B-18-12 by Governor Jerry Brown, among other things, ordered 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.

California State Buildings. Existing law, pursuant to SB 416 (Laird, Chapter 395, Statutes of 2023) requires that all new buildings or major renovation projects undertaken by a state agency obtain the LEED Gold or higher certification, except as provided. The Senate Governmental Organization Committee analysis of that bill noted that:

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 ESG 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. 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 Certification. As an alternative to achieving LEED Gold or higher certification, as specified, this bill would additionally authorize a state agency undertaking a new building or major renovation project to achieve Three Green Globes or higher certification. While LEED certification is handled by two related – but distinct – organizations, the Green Globes building certification process is

handled by the Green Building Initiative. Under the LEED, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) develops and maintains the LEED rating system such as 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.

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. Supporters of this approach argue that Green Globes offer a faster, cheaper, and more flexible certification process.

This bill provides that the authority to obtain Three Green Globes or higher for new buildings or major renovations to any such projects undertaken by a state agency on or after January 1, 2027.

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)

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/4/26)

Green Building Initiative (Source)

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
IAPMO Group

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/4/26)

U.S. Green Building Council

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of the bill, the Green Building Initiative writes that, “[e]xplicitly including Green Globes in California statute as on par with other named green building certifications will provide for greater competition, flexibility, and cost effectiveness for state infrastructure projects required to meet green building standards for sustainability purposes in line with SB 416. Further, explicitly including equivalent and competitive green building certifications will benefit more than just state infrastructure projects including multi-family, commercial, academic, data center and other assets.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: In opposition to the bill, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) writes, “USGBC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the way buildings and communities are designed, built, and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous world. Our flagship green building system, LEED, has been embraced in California by property owners, developers, business owners, and building professionals. Currently, there are more than 8,195 certified projects amounting to more than 1.4 billion square feet across the state. Our education and professional credential programs support green building in the state as well, with more than 27,526 Californians holding a LEED Accredited Professional (AP) or a LEED Green Associate credential. Indeed, California and USGBC have evolved together to advance green building and sustainable buildings practices over the past several decades; and in such partnership, we note the important contributions California public officials and building practitioners have made to continuously pushing LEED forward through participating in LEED Technical Committees and in other volunteer roles.[Click here to enter text.](#)”

Further, “California has a strong code floor through Title 24 and CALGreen, so the question is whether the proposed changes to the statutory requirement for state projects build on the existing code, facilitate the state’s building decarbonization goals, and provide the same or greater policy outcomes for state buildings. They do not appear to:

- SB 1398 assumes that specified levels of LEED and Green Globes certifications have equivalent outcomes: We do not believe this is the case. The LEED rating system (notably LEED v5) requires all projects to address some of California's top policy priorities: climate resilience, operational carbon planning tied to electrification or longterm decarbonization, and embodied carbon assessment.
- LEED certification is based on a set number of points earned in a project, whereas Green Globes is awarded on percentage of points earned – and projects are allowed to reduce the number of total points considered. That is, Green Globes projects have different 'denominators,' with the effect of shifting the actual outcome from project to project under Green Globes. In contrast, LEED maintains the same scorecard. Thus, for example, all LEED Gold certified projects achieved between 60 and 79 points. The LEED vs. Green Globes achievement measurement methods are not interchangeable as they do not produce the same outcomes.
- Prerequisites are an essential foundation to holistic green building, ensuring all projects have met a baseline of high performance. Under LEED, a project must achieve prerequisites across all categories, then select the credits best aligned with their project and goals. Under Green Globes there are no mandatory criteria; this allows project owners to choose not to earn any points in biodiversity or indoor air quality, for example. In a state with strong code floors, a certification system designed to reward only jurisdictional minimums and not leadership may add less policy value above code.”

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