

Date of Hearing: June 24, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Blanca Rubio, Chair

SB 1398 (Rubio) – As Amended March 25, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

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

SUMMARY: This bill would authorize a state agency to use the Green Globes certification as an alternative to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) to meet green building requirements. Specifically, **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.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Governs, pursuant to the State Contract Act, Part 2 (commencing with Section 10100) of Division 2 of the Public Contract Code, the bidding and awarding of public works contracts by specific state departments and requires an awarding department, before entering into any contract for a project, to prepare a full, complete, and accurate plan with specifications and cost estimates. (Public Contract Code Sec. 10120)
- 2) Provides all new building and major renovation projects larger than 10,000 gross square feet undertaken by state agencies shall obtain LEED Gold or higher certification using the version of LEED that is in effect at the time the project schematic design documents are initiated by the state agency. Certification to an alternative equivalent or higher rating system or standard, if any, is only acceptable when approved by the Department of General Services (DGS).
- 3) States if the state agency concerned makes a finding that achieving LEED Gold conflicts with critical operational or security requirements, can be demonstrated to be cost ineffective, or conflicts with requirements in the California Building Code, the state agency shall instead obtain LEED Silver certification using the version of LEED that is in effect at the time the project schematic design documents are initiated by the state agency.
- 4) Defines “LEED” to mean the Leadership and Environmental Design building certification program under the auspices of the United States Green Building Council.

5) Defines “major renovation” to mean a renovation of a structure in which most of the major building systems are either replaced or upgraded.

6) Establishes DGS, in the Government Operations Agency (GovOps), to provide centralized services, including, but not limited to, planning, acquisition, construction, and maintenance of state buildings and property, purchasing, printing, architectural services, administrative hearings, and accounting services.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill. According to the author’s office, “This bill would update 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.”

Background.

Executive Order B-18-12. In 2012, Governor Brown issued Executive Order (EO) B-18-12, which among other things, required new state buildings, major renovations, and build-to-suit leases larger than 10,000 square feet to obtain LEED Silver or higher certification. 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 DGS 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.

State building requirements. 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 and Green Globes. 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. LEED is powered by comprehensive education offerings designed to equip professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to design, build, and operate sustainable buildings.

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. It is one of only two whole building certification programs recognized by the U.S. federal government. Whole building certification evaluates a building's total performance across energy use, water efficiency, materials, building systems (including HVAC, lighting, and plumbing), indoor environment quality, and site — rather than any single feature in isolation.

It should be noted that in addition to the federal government, a host of states (Maryland, Virginia, Illinois, and Colorado) and municipalities have adopted policies that include Green Globes as equivalent to LEED for various infrastructure assets including state and municipal infrastructure, multi family, commercial, industrial, data centers and more. The author's office further notes that GBI has certified more than 1 billion square feet of commercial and multifamily space worldwide, and 53,291,200 of those square feet are located within California.

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.

Committee staff notes that allowing DGS to pursue either Green Globes or LEED certification might provide greater flexibility in achieving the department's overall sustainability goals. This administrative action is enabling rather than mandatory.

In support. 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 of 2023. 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.”

Supporters further note, “SB 1398 will help ensure flexibility for state infrastructure projects for green building certification to enable the use of the most relevant and appropriate certification system for each individual project. Further, recognition of additional, equivalent green building certifications in state statute will help increase competition that will provide fiscal and timeline efficiencies for state infrastructure projects.”

In opposition. The U.S. Green Building Council writes, “we remain in opposition of bypassing the existing pathway that requires technical equivalence to be shown, and therefore the ability to meet California’s aggressive climate goals. The current law provides a process for DGS to add additional certification programs. If the bill moves forward despite its bypassing of existing statute, we would ask legislators to include an amendment such as: A certification added outside the existing statutory pathway must provide a written, publicly available equivalency determination to DGS within six months of bill enrollment. The determination must be based on technical performance metrics, state climate goals, and the current version of rating systems in the comparison in effect at the date enrolled in statute for the new changes. The DGS has sixty (60) calendar days to accept or provide written comments to the technical documentation after date of receipt.”

Prior legislation. SB 416 (Laird), Chapter 395, Statutes of 2023. Required 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) of 2023. Would have required, with certain exceptions, a state agency, as defined, to ensure that an outdoor lighting fixture that is newly installed on or after January 1, 2024, on a structure or land that is owned, leased, or managed by the state agency meets prescribed criteria, including using a lamp with a correlated color temperature that does not exceed 2,700 Kelvin. (Held on the Senate Appropriations Suspense File)

AB 2382 (Lee) of 2022. Would have required state agencies, with certain exceptions, to ensure that outdoor lighting fixtures installed or replaced on or after January 1, 2023, on a structure or land that is owned, leased, or managed by the state agency is shielded, as defined, and meets additional minimal illuminance criteria, as specified. (Vetoed by the Governor)

SB 30 (Cortese) of 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)

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Subcontractors Association-California

B. Kevin Bennett, PhD.

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

The IAPMO Group
Mackenzie

Oppose

International Living Future Institute
U.S. Green Building Council

Oppose Unless Amended

USGBC California

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