



April 3, 2012

The Honorable Alex Padilla  
Chair, Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5046  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 1165 (Wright)**

**SPONSOR**

Dear Senator Padilla:

The School Energy Coalition (SEC), an organization made up of K-14 schools, school construction and energy consultants with a focus on energy efficiency and renewable generation facility projects for California's students, is pleased to sponsor SB 1165 (Wright).

SB 1165 (Wright) would allow schools to fully and formally participate in utility proceedings that may impact school energy projects by allowing them to be eligible for the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) intervenor compensation program.

For a myriad of reasons, K-14 schools have shown environmental and fiscal leadership in moving toward energy efficiency upgrades and renewable projects statewide. Clean energy projects stabilize budgets and generate savings on electricity bills. Dollars saved through these investments may be used for other purposes such as teacher support, equipment and student books and supplies.

California's schools have also been supported and encouraged to make these investments through statewide policies that encourage conservation and investment in renewable power and through statewide efforts such as the Division of the State Architect's (DSA) Grid Neutral Program, which provided guidance for schools to create campuses that "generate as much electrical energy as they consume in a year".

Schools are poised to save well over a half a billion dollars over the life of these projects through projects constructed and being applied for through the California Solar Initiative (CSI).

Yet, the savings that are promised in these investments may be jeopardized as the energy landscape in California is in transition, and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has current and planned proceedings on utility

rates and programs that could wipe away savings and significantly lengthen project payback periods making future projects unfeasible.

Commissioners should hear from schools, but often do not, as the resources needed to fully participate in these proceedings are well beyond their means.

The CPUC itself has proposed and supported such a bill in Decision 98-04-059, stating:

“We invite legislative proposals that will broaden the substantial contribution standard, allow local public education institutions to qualify as “customers,” and provide support for the optional track as a means for awarding periodic payments.” (Decision 98-04-059, p. 3.)

“We would support a Legislative amendment to make it clear that local public education ... are customers able to avail themselves of our intervenor compensation program.” (Decision 98-04-059, p. 25.)

If schools are unable to formally participate in CPUC proceedings due to financial constraints, pending CPUC items such as whether schools should be eligible for funding under ratepayer funded programs such as the public goods charge, efficiency program extensions, and utility rate increases that could negatively impact local investments, such as the SDG&E rate case currently going forward, could be discussed without their input. Schools should be able to fully and formally explain their situation and the impacts of these decisions.

CPUC’s website states that “as a public agency, the CPUC depends on input, questions, and feedback from the general public. By hearing from different perspectives, the CPUC is better able to make informed decisions that consider the impact of utility costs and services on all Californians.”

SB 1165 (Wright) would allow schools who have a stake in these proceedings and meet the requirements of the program, to participate.

For these reasons, SEC has sponsored and strongly supports this measure. We urge your aye vote when it comes before you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Ferrera". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Anna Ferrera

cc: Senator Roderick Wright  
Kellie Smith, Chief Consultant, Senate Energy, Utilities and  
Communications Committee