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November 22, 2021

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**Representative Casello and Senator Berman Introduce  
*Emergency Shelters Preparedness Act to Harden Florida  
Against Extreme Weather Events***

**Tallahassee, Fla.** — Florida’s schools open their doors to 3 million students every day and also serve as safe emergency shelters for communities during disasters. **Representative Joe Casello (D-Boynton Beach) and Senator Lori Berman (D-Delray)** recently introduced [SB 600/](#)[HB599](#) to provide incentive for schools to upgrade their energy systems to include on-site solar power and battery storage. Under the bill, upgrades designed to improve the hardiness and energy independence of educational facilities will be exempted up to \$2 million from the cost per student station limitation.

Energy efficiency investments, coupled with upgrading solar technology and tried and tested financing tools, will allow school districts to drastically cut energy bills while simultaneously making schools more secure and resilient in the face of power outages and natural disasters.

“Florida is on the frontlines of climate change. There is a real necessity in hardening our communities and emergency shelters against increasingly volatile weather events. Through wider use of reliable solar energy – a seemingly obvious choice in the Sunshine State – every emergency shelter in the state could benefit. Ninety-seven percent of emergency shelters in Florida are K-12 schools, but only around 100 of them have solar and storage systems. This is common sense legislation that will better prepare our state and people for disaster,” said **Senator Lori Berman**.

“When it comes to school resiliency, we cannot let Florida fall behind. HB599 is common sense legislation that will give our schools the needed tools to prepare for extreme weather events as well as support affordable clean energy,” added **Representative Joe Casello**.

“We know that true community resiliency includes mitigating global warming pollution, while also adapting to the impacts of a warming and changing climate. This legislation does both, it allows us to transition to cleaner & renewable sources of

energy, while using solar and on-site battery storage to provide backup power for emergency shelters,” said **Salome Garcia, Policy and Campaigns Manager - The CLEO Institute**

“Energy is typically among the top three expenses for schools, and this program would unlock more savings, keeping dollars in schools. Schools’ investments in energy saving technology such as solar provide real-world learning opportunities in STEM fields as well,” said **Heaven Campbell, Solar United Neighbors**

“Removing barriers to solar installation is a commonsense solution to cut operating costs for schools and allow them to invest elsewhere — all while accelerating Florida’s transition to renewable energy and providing communities with safe places to shelter during extreme weather. SB 600 will be a win for our children, economic development, and community safety,” added **Katie Chiles Ottenweller, Vote Solar**

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