

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5862

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Environment, Energy & Technology, January 19, 2022
Housing & Local Government, February 2, 2022

Title: An act relating to technical changes to the commercial property assessed clean energy and resiliency program.

Brief Description: Concerning technical changes to the commercial property assessed clean energy and resiliency program.

Sponsors: Senators Lovelett, Rivers, Fortunato, Gildon, Kuderer, Lovick, Nguyen, Nobles, Stanford, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environment, Energy & Technology: 1/19/22 [w/oRec-HLG].
Housing & Local Government: 1/26/22, 2/02/22 [DPS].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Clarifies the responsibilities of a capital provider of Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resiliency (C-PACER) funds to include the billing, collection, and enforcement of delinquent C-PACER liens or C-PACER assessment installments.
- Authorizes a delinquent C-PACER lien to be foreclosed in the same manner as a mortgage lien.
- Specifies the order in which proceeds of the foreclosure sale of the property must be applied.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5862 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Signed by Senators Kuderer, Chair; Das, Vice Chair; Fortunato, Ranking Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Member; Cleveland, Lovelett, Salomon, Sefzik, Trudeau, Warnick and Wilson, J.

Staff: Maggie Douglas (786-7279)

Background: Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resiliency. Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resiliency (C-PACER) programs provide a financing mechanism to encourage the installation of renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements on multifamily residential, industrial, agricultural or commercial properties. Eligible improvements frequently include installation of solar thermal panels, high efficiency air conditioning, and insulation. C-PACER programs allow a property owner to finance the up-front cost of energy or other eligible improvements on a property and then pay the costs back over time through a property assessment. The Legislature established the regulatory framework for state and countywide C-PACER programs during the 2020 regular session.

Special Assessments. Special assessments, or benefit assessments, may be imposed on benefitted property to pay for local improvements or to finance their activities and public facilities. Special assessments are not property taxes, but rather special charges created to recover funds to pay for services or improvements that have a particular direct benefit to land and their owners. Unlike property taxes that are based on the assessment value of the property, special assessments are generally determined by an assessment plan meant to charge amounts to a parcel of property that reflect the actual benefit the property will receive. Special assessments are not subject to the same limitations and procedures that govern property tax levies.

Liens and Enforcement. Collection and enforcement of the C-PACER lien or C-PACER financing installment payments, including foreclosure, is the responsibility of the capital provider. The lien must be enforced by the capital provider at any time after one year from the date of delinquency in the same manner as delinquent property taxes, except that a sworn declaration by the capital provider attesting to the delinquency must be used in lieu of the certificate of delinquency.

The capital provider may sell or assign for consideration any and all C-PACER liens received from the participating county. Before a capital provider may enter into a financing agreement to provide C-PACER financing of a qualified project, the capital provider must receive written consent from any holder of a lien, mortgage, or security interest in the real property that the property may participate in the program and the C-PACER lien will take precedence over all other liens except for a lien for taxes imposed by the state, a local government, or junior taxing district. A capital provider may collect delinquent payments in the same manner a county collects delinquent real property taxes, including lien foreclosure.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): The capital provider of C-PACER funds is responsible for billing, collection, and enforcement of delinquent C-PACER liens or C-PACER assessment installments. The C-PACER lien may be foreclosed in the same manner as a mortgage lien. The sale of the property may not impact the priority of the C-PACER lien. A capital provider may not seek deficiency judgement with regard to any unpaid assessment at time of sale.

The capital provider may collect delinquent interest and penalties in the same manner provided by the financing agreement during a foreclosure proceeding. The proceeds of the foreclosure sale of the property must be first applied to the outstanding liens for taxes imposed by the state, local government, or junior taxing district, and then applied to the delinquent assessments, interest, and penalties secured by the C-PACER lien.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute: PRO: This bill makes technical corrections needed to the original C-PACER program. Advocates in counties have been passing local ordinances to allow C-PACER programs to operate within their county, and in the process of implementing this at the local level, identified that there needed to be a technical correction to the underlying statute. This technical fix to the enforcement mechanism of the program alleviates the ambiguity in the original statute and removes the burden of interpretation on county officials. C-PACER programs have been launched all over the country and local jurisdictions in Washington are eager to begin operating the C-PACER program in their communities.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Liz Lovelett, Prime Sponsor; Jeff Gadman, Thurston County Treasurer and WSACT Vice President; Elyssa Roth, Nuveen Green Capital; Richard Martinez, Kitsap Bank; Michael Yaki, Petros PACE Finance, LLC; Cliff Kellogg, C-PACE Alliance; Erik Makinson, Resource Synergy; Catherine Stanford, Building Owners & Managers Assn (BOMA).

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.