

**Joint Committee on Higher Education Bill
Summary**

<u>BILL NUMBER</u>	S.949
<u>TITLE</u>	An Act to provide green and healthy public colleges and universities and address their deferred maintenance needs
<u>SPONSORS</u>	Senator Oliveira
<u>SIMILAR MATTERS</u>	H.1426
<u>PRIOR HISTORY</u>	New file

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Planning commission to assess all public higher education institution buildings for energy efficiency and public health adequacy. The commission shall create standards for green and healthy buildings, make recommendations for improvements, and create a plan to implement these recommendations in all buildings by 2037. This plan must be submitted to the legislature. The commission shall also create a public searchable dashboard detailing their findings. The bill establishes a Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Fund to help finance this initiative. The bill also establishes a Public College and University Capital Debt Relief Fund, dedicated to relieving debt service obligations, and requires any funds freed by relieving this debt service to be used for faculty, staff, and student success programs. The bill also requires any deferred maintenance or construction costs to be covered in full by the Commonwealth.

SECTION-BY-SECTION

Section 1: Inserts section 48 into chapter 15A:

- (a) Establishes a Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Planning Commission consisting of legislators, university representatives, and relevant stakeholders.
- (b) Tasks the commission with making recommendations to improve energy efficiency, spacial adequacy, accessibility, environmental quality, life safety, and public health in public higher education buildings. The commission shall meet not less than every ten years to monitor implementation and make any new assessments.
- (c) The commission shall use a list of factors enumerated in the bill to assess the extent to which public higher education buildings provide students with a healthy environment and can be characterized as ‘green and healthy public higher education buildings’ and shall develop standards for said buildings. The commission shall create a searchable public dashboard detailing their findings for all public higher education buildings.
- (d) The commission members may receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred while working for the commission but not compensation for their service. The DHE

commissioner shall furnish necessary staff and support.

Section 2:

Inserts section 2BBBBBB into chapter 29:

- Establishes a Public College and University Capital Debt Relief Fund to provide financial relief for debt service association with capital construction projects at institutions, and stipulates that students may not be charged fees to cover said debt service. Funds shall only be used to cover debt service and any investments made available by relieving these obligations shall be put towards hiring full-time faculty and staff, benefits for adjunct faculty, and student success programs that improve the college experience and graduation rates.

Inserts section 2CCCCC into chapter 29:

- Establishes a Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Fund to be used to fund and implement recommendations of the commission for renovation and rehabilitation to meet green and healthy building standards.

Section 3:

Any costs associated with building construction at a higher education institution shall be paid in full from state or federal funds and not with any any public higher education institutional funds or financed through public building authorities or private entities. Any costs associated with deferred maintenance or upgrades and repairs being conducted by the department of capital asset management and maintenance shall be paid by the commonwealth.

Section 4:

The commission created by section 1 shall create a plan for all existing and new public higher education buildings to meet the standards established by the commission. This plan must include recommendations, including an analysis of the commission's findings and a timeline to implement all standards in all higher education buildings by 2037. The recommendations should:

- Prioritize the buildings with greatest needs;
- Consider unique environmental conditions and needs to address historic injustices and inequities;
- Estimate the cost of this plan and recommended funding for these costs; and
- Compare initial costs with long-term savings.

The commission shall conduct public hearings at every commonwealth institution of public higher education and consult with employee organizations to develop this plan. The first plan should be published and submitted to the legislature before December 1, 2028.