



### ***H.R. 2: Invests in Critical Infrastructure - Includes PK-12 Public School Facilities***

**Washington D.C., July 1, 2020:** Today the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2--the Invest in America Act--a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure stimulus bill that includes \$100 billion in grants to states to reopen and rebuild America's school infrastructure. These federal funds will help local districts and states meet the nation's 10 year estimated needs for \$870 billion to modernize and build our nation's PK-12 facilities.

H.R. 2 authorizes an immediate \$20 billion in FY20 to help school districts reopen and operate school facilities during this pandemic. These funds could support immediate health mitigation measures so our nation's 50 million students can return to schools safely and their families can return to work. The other \$80 billion in grants would be authorized for FY21-24 to help states and local districts modernize antiquated and hazardous facilities in the nation's highest need and low wealth districts. [To see a state by state estimate of the grant allocations go here](#). Provisions for an additional \$30 billion in interest subsidies would be available to local districts, helping to offset financing costs for school construction bonds.

"This is a great day for public education," said former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley. "Twenty-five years ago we began the push to modernize our nation's schools and to get the federal government to help out. It has been a long time coming. Public schools are great civic institutions at the very center of our communities."

Riley went on, "The majority of our schools are now over 50 years old and too often they are unhealthy buildings. This funding will be a great help in reopening schools this fall and it sets the stage to build a new generation of modern school facilities that are safe, healthy, green and resilient. Let's remember that the schools we build now will still be in use in 2075 if not longer."

The passing of H.R. 2 is only the first important legislative step. This bill must pass the Senate, and get the signature of the President. "While we have a long way to go I want to thank the Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Chairman Bobby Scott for passing H.R. 2 on behalf of the BASIC Coalition" said Mary Filardo, the Chair of the [BASIC Coalition](#) and Executive Director of the 21st Century School Fund. "This bill has the potential to help reopen each of our schools, and leverage state and local funds to modernize nearly 10,000 of our most deteriorated public schools."

Filardo went on, "H.R. 2's investment in our infrastructure is a ray of light. It gives us hope. Modern school facilities will prepare students for the future, anchor our communities, and be resilient in the face of human and natural threats."

"States have been stepping up to help local districts address the backlogs and deficiencies in our public school facilities" says Scott Brown, Director of School Facilities for the Maine Department of Education, and President of the National Council on School Facilities, "but the deficiencies are too great for states and local districts to do it without federal help." A June 2020 [GAO report](#) noted that 36,000 schools across the country need upgrades or replacement of their HVAC systems.

**Press Contact: Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund, [MFilardo@21csf.org](mailto:MFilardo@21csf.org) 202-285-8947**

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### **Comments on Reopening and Modernizing our Nation's Public School Facilities:**

*"For far too long we have chronically underfunded our schools and as a result, many students and educators are stuck with unwelcoming to even hazardous learning environments. On a daily basis, public schools largely in rural and urban areas - and too often schools serving primarily Black and Hispanic communities - face numerous infrastructure challenges, ranging from moldy ceiling tiles to inoperable heating and cooling systems and more. That is why as America's educators focus on what it will take to safely reopen school buildings this fall, it is critical that Congress pass the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act. In addition to making our schools safer for students and educators, this would help communities hard hit by the ongoing economic crisis to create good jobs across America and help address some of the structural inequities in our nation's public school infrastructure," **said National Education Association President, Lily Eskelsen Garcia.** "We applaud Speaker Pelosi and House Democrats for including the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act as part of their effort to rebuild America's ageing infrastructure and encourage Congress to swiftly pass this legislation."*

*"As our public school boards work to reopen schools safely for our students, educators, and communities, school districts may be considering infrastructure modernization and expansion projects to comply with public health and social distancing requirements amid the COVID-19 pandemic," noted **Anna Maria Chavez, Esq., Executive Director and CEO of the National School Boards Association.** "The Rebuild America's Schools Act would create needed opportunities to equip more classrooms with modern broadband connections, provide resources for state-of-the-art science laboratories, and facilitate energy efficient green building design - all of which help advance equity and excellence in public education for our nation's more than 50 million school children."*

*"School infrastructure is a major problem that can wait no longer for a solution. With the average public school over 50 years old, the need to update and make safer our 100,000 public K-12 school facilities across the country has reached a critical juncture. Each day, thousands of students and educators attend buildings with rotting floors and ceilings, inadequate heating and air conditioning, surrounded by mold and other irritants-all making for less than optimal learning and teaching conditions. If we want our children to have a world class education, we need to provide world class schools." - **Ernest Logan, President, American Federation of School Administrators***

*"The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools strongly supports the inclusion of the Rebuild America's Schools Act in the INVEST in America Act. NAFIS especially applauds the inclusion of the Impact Aid construction program as Title IV of the Rebuild*

*America's Schools Act. Public schools are a critical piece of our nation's infrastructure, and school facilities directly impact students' health and ability to learn. The infrastructure needs in federally impacted school districts are especially urgent. In a 2017 study, NAFIS identified over \$4.2 billion in pressing infrastructure needs - including emergency repairs necessary to protect the health and safety of students and educators - in 218 districts alone. An investment in schools is an investment in our nation's future." - Hilary Goldmann, Executive Director, NAFIS*

*"Equitable access to a healthy learning environment, with vibrant indoor and outdoor spaces for learning and play is essential to the well-being and academic success of every child. NAAEE celebrates the passage of the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act as part of H.R. 2, which includes significant funding for improving school facilities in the communities that need it most." - Judy Braus, Executive Director, North American Association for Environmental Education*

*"We applaud the passage of the Moving Forward Act by the House, which is a step in the right direction to rebuild America's infrastructure - not only roads and bridges, but public schools, affordable housing and other investments that enrich communities and enable families to thrive. The focus of the Act on communities that have experienced significant disinvestment, particularly communities of color, is especially important and welcome because of longstanding disparities in access to high-quality community infrastructure." - James Siegal, CEO, KABOOM!*

*"The backlog of construction, renovation and repair work in our nation's public schools has been well known for years and easily exceeds billions of dollars. And that was before a world pandemic shut the schools down and forced a critical conversation about ensuring the schools are ready to safely and healthily greet our students when they reopen this fall. The need was well documented in a GAO report issued just this month, which found that approximately half of public school districts need to update or replace multiple building systems or features in their schools. Highlighting the importance of this need and the critical role of federal support in response to both the need and the COVID pandemic, an estimated 41 percent of districts reported needing to update or replace heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in at least half of their schools. By including the Rebuild America's Schools Act in HR 2, Congress provides immediate relief to help districts in their efforts to reopen this fall while also creating jobs hard hit by economic downturn and addressing structural inequities in the existing K12 public education infrastructure." - Daniel A. Domenech, Executive Director, AASA, The School Superintendents Association*

*"COVID-19, in conjunction with other challenges we face in school settings like school safety, social justice, occupant health, and sustainability, will require America to completely rethink the way schools are designed, renovated, and built. As leaders in the effort to revolutionize these spaces, the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and our members urge Congress to invest in education by including the Rebuild America's Schools Act (RASA) in an infrastructure and economic stimulus package and appropriating \$20 billion per-year over the next five years for school facilities." - Bryan J. Soukup, Vice President, Government & Public Affairs, American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)*

*" H.R. 2 is a big step in the right direction-our nation's schools are vital to our health and prosperity. Federal investment to make sure we have greater equity and quality is an*

appropriate federal role. **-Jeff Vincent, Director of Public Infrastructure Initiatives, Center for Cities + Schools UC Berkeley, CA**

*"America's students and teachers deserve school environments that protect their health and use today's best practices for building efficiency. With all that our schools are being asked to manage in support of their local communities right now, the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council believes that the funding that this bill provides for school infrastructure is a critical need."* - **Anisa Heming, Director of the Center for Green Schools at USGBC**

*"No child should need to tell a parent "I can't breathe" in school. But too many children of color in low income communities do that daily. For decades America's schools have left millions of children short of clean air and left behind in inadequate buildings, eroding their ability to think. In 1995 the US GAO said the conditions of our schools put 13 million children at risk. Today, we regard ALL children at risk. The new US GAO report underscores the need to address ventilation, roofing, and molds, all tied to indoor air. In this tragic pandemic year, the poorest children returning to the poorest schools in the hardest hit COVID-19 communities need the resources promised by the Rebuild America's Schools Act. All children need clean air in school."* - **Claire L. Barnett, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network**

*"School leaders' top priority for reopening in a COVID-19 climate is to keep students, staff, and communities safe. Whether they can effectively do this depends on the resources available to support them, which the Rebuild America's Schools Act would provide. Facility repairs and upgrades that improve air quality, encourage better hygiene, and reduce exposure to health hazards not only protect those who return this fall, but are an investment in the health of generations to come. If we want our children to learn and succeed, they must be safe and healthy."* - **David Lewis, Executive Director, ASBO International**

*"Equity in education is vital to the success of all students. The passage of Rebuild America's Schools Act (RASA) will help level the playing field for communities by investing in education facilities that better prepare students for a future that requires 21st Century skill sets."* - **Jim McGarry, President & CEO, Education Market Association**

*"All children deserve to breathe clean air and drink clean water and have access to vibrant outdoor spaces to learn and play at school. RASA will provide resources for critical improvements to school buildings and grounds in districts that need it most. Making sure that all students have safe and healthy indoor and outdoor environments for learning is essential to student success and well-being."* - **Sarah Bodor, Director of Policy, North American Association for Environmental Education**

*"It shouldn't matter where a student attends school: the school building should be safe, up-to-date, and free from health risks. But for too many students that's not the case. Many school buildings across the country were built decades ago and are outdated, deteriorating, and potentially unsafe. The Rebuild America's Schools Act would provide much needed support to districts and schools to make upgrades and improvements to school facilities and create learning environments that are conducive for students to learn and thrive."* - **Dr. Earl Franks, CAE, Executive Director, National Association of Elementary School Principals**

*"School districts across the nation are in desperate need of federal infrastructure funding to fix aging buildings and outfit facilities to meet the demands of a 21st century education. The*

*School District of Philadelphia includes more than 200 school buildings, half of which are more than 70 years old, with some more than 120 years old. Federal infrastructure funding would allow us to remediate asbestos from all student and staff occupied spaces, certify every school as lead safe, and begin to address our \$4.5 billion in deferred maintenance all while helping to get residents back to work and our economy growing again. I applaud the U.S. House of Representatives efforts to move legislation forward and I urge the U.S. Senate to quickly do the same." - Dr. William R. Hite, Superintendent, The School District of Philadelphia*

[The Re\[Build\] America's School Infrastructure Coalition \(BASIC\)](#) is a non-partisan coalition of civic, public sector, labor, and industry associations who support federal funding to help under-served public school districts modernize and build K-12 public school facilities. We believe that ALL children should attend healthy, safe, and educationally appropriate school facilities. It's BASIC.

To learn more: Visit BASIC's [website](#), which includes [resources](#) and recent school facilities news.

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21st Century School Fund, 1816 12th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009

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