



**For Immediate Release
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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The [re]Build America's Schools Infrastructure Coalition (**BASIC**) pledged strong support today for the "Rebuild America's Schools Act." We commend Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) for their continued leadership, on behalf of America's students, in introducing this much-needed legislation.

Our nation's 100,000 schools are a core public infrastructure and the nation's second largest national infrastructure investment, after roads and bridges. Every weekday, 56 million children and adults - 1 in 6 of all Americans - set foot in a public school. They provide our nation's children with a learning environment essential to their achievement and to the productivity of working parents and guardians. Schools also anchor communities. They serve as community centers for a wide array of programs, such as school breakfasts and lunches, after-school care, community health clinics, disaster-relief centers, and voting places.

Yet, the average public school building is about 50 years old and half of our nation's public schools - in urban and rural areas - need major facility repairs. In 2017, the **American Society of Civil Engineers gave our public K-12 infrastructure a "D+."** This leaves millions of public school children in schools that pose health threats and undercut their efforts and those of their teachers.

"Local communities and states have invested an average of \$49 billion annually over the last 20 years to keep their public school facilities in good repair and to build additions and new schools to serve growing enrollments and changing educational requirements. To accomplish this, local districts amassed \$434 billion in long-term debt (as of the end of fiscal year 2016). But even with this tremendous effort, low-wealth and high-need school districts and states simply can't keep up with the needs of their aging buildings. Public school districts are short an estimated \$38 billion each year," said Mary Filardo, Chair of BASIC and Executive Director of the non-profit 21st Century School Fund.

Recent news coverage of lead in school water fountains and students forced to wear winter coats in class because of failed furnaces underscore that the time is ripe for a large-scale solution. According to a January 2019 poll conducted by POLITICO and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, **66 percent of Americans – the majority of Democrats and Republicans- identify federal spending on public school buildings as "extremely important."**

The federal government has a long history of supporting relatively small, discrete programs for public school facilities funding through many different federal agencies. Targeted federal funds have been provided through FEMA disaster relief and mitigation; U.S. Department of Education Impact Aid and charter credit enhancement; Department of the Treasury tax credit bonds; and the Department of Agriculture, Secure Rural Schools Program; Department of Health and Human Services for Head Start facilities; and the Department of the Interior, for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools—to name a few.¹

¹ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R41142> Congressional Research Service, School Construction and Renovation: A Review of Federal Programs, Updated November 16, 2015.

“The issue now is one of fairness, scale, and efficiency. Low-wealth and high-need school districts are simply unable to provide children, teachers, and other school staff the teaching and learning environments they need,” Filardo said.

The responsibilities for and control of our public school facilities will remain with local school districts, with funding support from states. The Rebuild America’s Schools Act can meet about 10% of the needs of districts. But it is a significant step forward, a smart investment in our nation’s communities and economy, and an appropriate federal role. The legislation, if enacted, would provide targeted funding, in block grants to states, to help rebuild our nation’s schools and struggling communities.

The federal funds will also leverage other state and local public and private investments. For example, states will need to match the federal funds and Rebuild America’s Schools funding will buttress the impact of investments in Opportunity Zones, where 13,500 public schools are located--a benefit for investors and communities.

“We urge Members of Congress to work across the aisle on this important issue to deliver safe, healthy, modern, and well-equipped schools to students across our nation,” Filardo said.

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The **[Re]Build America’s School Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC)** is a non-partisan, diverse coalition of civic, public sector, and industry associations that support federal funding to help underserved public school districts modernize their facilities. Members believe that ALL children should attend healthy, safe, and educationally appropriate school facilities. For more information, visit us at www.buildusschools.org. Follow BASIC on Twitter [@BuildUSschools](https://twitter.com/BuildUSschools)