



BASIC

[Re] Build America's School Infrastructure Coalition

Media Release - March 12th

NATIONAL SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE COALITION APPLAUDS PRESIDENT BIDEN AND CONGRESS FOR EMERGENCY RELIEF TO REOPEN SCHOOLS & BEGIN TO ADDRESS UNHEALTHY SCHOOL FACILITIES CONDITIONS

WASHINGTON D.C. - March 12, 2021—The [\[Re\]Build America's School Infrastructure Coalition \(BASIC\)](#) of 130 education, civic, labor, and industry organizations is committed to ensuring all children attend schools in healthy, modern facilities. 21st Century School Fund Director and BASIC Leader Mary Filardo says, "It is so important that public school districts have some federal funding that allows for facilities repairs and improvements to reopen and operate schools safely during this pandemic." The Coalition applauds Congress and the Administration for the importance and enormous benefit that can come from the \$122 billion of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds in the Education American Rescue Plan.

"We have heard from school districts across the country that they have purchased equipment and supplies for their facilities to meet public health guidance on social distancing, cleaning, and ventilation, but that they are falling short, and have deferred critical maintenance and repairs needed to operate safely." says Anisa Heming, Director of the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council.

The historic investment in public education is needed to address the severe learning loss, educator retention, facilities improvements and other emergency activities related to the fallout from COVID-19. The ESSER funds allow school districts to use a portion of these funds to make much-needed repairs to crumbling school facilities and improvements to facilities to support [Centers for Disease Control guidance](#) on reopening.

"With new funds going to states and to schools in the Rescue Plan, we can now help all school children breathe clean air in school," says Claire Barnett, Executive Director of the Healthy Schools Network.

Mary Filardo, Executive Director of the 21st Century School Fund explains: "Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, school districts were faced with a crisis in addressing our aged and deteriorated school facilities. There is an urgent need to modernize our schools and build schools that are safe, healthy, and resilient for the generations to come."

While some relief funds can be used to address school facilities issues, the American Rescue Plan funding does not negate the need for public school modernization to be included in the forthcoming Biden Administration infrastructure bill. According to a [June 2020 GAO national survey of school districts](#), "an estimated 41 percent of districts need to update or replace heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in at least half of their schools, representing about 36,000 schools nationwide that need HVAC updates."

“Communities absolutely need these Rescue Plan funds to begin to address the crumbling conditions in school facilities and help close the [equity gaps that exist due to the](#) disparity in resources available to low wealth communities,” says Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald, Director, Children’s Defense Fund’s Southern Regional Office.

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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.

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