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**DIVERSE COALITION OF EDUCATION, LABOR, CIVIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS PRAISE HOUSE  
EDUCATION AND LABOR RECONCILIATION BILL'S INCLUSION OF \$82 BILLION TO  
MODERNIZE AMERICA'S K-12 SCHOOLS**

**Washington, D.C. – September 9, 2021** – Yesterday's release of the House Education and Labor reconciliation bill text, which includes \$82 billion to modernize K-12 schools is a momentous milestone for equitable advancements in education for our nation's traditionally underserved communities and the BASIC Coalition praises Chairman Bobby Scott for his leadership on this issue.

The [State of our Schools 2021: America's PK-12 Public School Facilities](#), released yesterday, underscores why this nation needs federal support for modernizing our public school facilities targeted to the highest need and lowest wealth districts. This national report provides an overview of research on the capital improvement costs needed to improve our nation's PK-12 facilities. It highlights the importance of public school facilities to education, health, the environment, communities, and resiliency. State of our Schools 2021 was written by the [21st Century School Fund](#) in partnership with the [National Council on School Facilities](#) and [International WELL Building Institute](#).

**This report uses national, state, and district data and information from FY2009-FY2019 to help communities and decision-makers understand:**

- The level of funding needed to ensure all children attend modern public school facilities;
- What districts, states and the federal government are doing to modernize public schools;
- The size of the deficit or gap between what's needed and what's being done;
- Which communities and students carry the burden of the shortfalls; and
- What districts, states and the federal government can do to reform our broken system for facilities.

**Key findings include:**

- Since 2009, the annual gap between what is needed to modernize America's schools and what districts and states are spending grew from \$46 billion (\$60 billion in 2020\$) a year to \$85 billion a year.
- There is a \$27.6 billion/yr gap for maintenance and operations of schools--cleaning, grounds keeping, routine maintenance and repairs, energy management, security, and utilities.
- The biggest gap—\$57.3 billion every year—is from districts unable to finance needed capital improvements. Poorer districts do not have the capital to replace worn-out systems, components, and equipment, and are unable to replace or modernize entire schools, even when this is the most economical and best solution.

“What the data and research really show in this report is the gaping inequities between low poverty districts and most other districts,” said **Mary Filardo, the author of the report and Executive Director of the 21st Century School Fund**. She continued, “Despite their best efforts to spend funds on facilities improvements, thousands of school districts simply don’t have the capacity to build new, modern, healthy school facilities that are green and resilient.” In terms of what is needed from Congress, “this is precisely why we need a direct grant program, funded at \$100 billion over 10 years, specifically for school facilities modernization, such as the Rebuild America’s Schools Act, championed by Chairman Scott and Senator Reed.”

**Oleta Fitzgerald, Regional Administrator, Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative for Economic and Social Justice (SRBWI)** asked: “What are we saying to poor children and school personnel when we send them back into school facilities that don’t have good circulation - even with masks these are dangerous situations - do their lives matter? When will America commit to a comprehensive plan to educate children in facilities and with the tools they need to function in a 21st-century economy? Our strength as a nation rests with the outcomes for these children today.”

**Dan Domenech, AASA, the School Superintendents Association’s Executive Director** explained: “The nation’s public school facilities are in crisis, grappling with essential maintenance and capital improvement delays that disproportionately impact students of color, low-income students and students in rural communities. Research shows that school facilities have a direct impact on student learning, student and staff health and school finances. If Democrats are committed to addressing educational inequities and emerging from the pandemic with a more successful public education system, then it is imperative they include \$130 billion for the Rebuild and Reopen America’s Schools Act in their reconciliation bill.”

“Five years after the last State of Our Schools Report, the deficits have grown and the same hard truth remains. If the condition of a community’s school facility is dependent on the local tax base, as almost all are, the conditions across our nation’s schools will remain inequitable,” says **Anisa Heming, Director of the Center for Green Schools, U.S. Green Building Council**. “It doesn’t have to be this way. With federal and state contribution, every child’s school could be an inspiring, safe and resilient learning environment that protects the health of its occupants, its community and the planet.”

“To put it simply, public schools and student learning conditions are vital parts of our nation’s infrastructure. Our school facilities represent the second largest sector in public infrastructure spending, and despite this, more than 50 million students and educators enter buildings each weekday that are substandard, crumbling, and unsafe. As the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated the inequities of every system in America, the need to improve our nation’s public school buildings has never been more acutely apparent. Congress must include the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act in the reconciliation bill,” said **Becky Pringle, President of the National Education Association (NEA)**.

“Decades of underinvestment in K-12 infrastructure has resulted in millions of students attending school in facilities in need of major repairs and upgrades, hamstringing a generation of students from reaching its full potential. It’s clear Congress must act to address these inequities. By including the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act in the reconciliation bill, Congress can help bring America’s school buildings into the 21st century and help provide students across the country the safe and healthy learning environments they deserve.” – **Dr. L. Earl Franks, Executive Director, National Association of Elementary School Principals**.

“Doing this critical work of good stewardship of our public school buildings and grounds provides good-paying jobs in communities across the nation. In fact, experts estimate that this investment in public school infrastructure will create more than a million jobs. This is a win-win for our schools and our economy.” – **Tim Driscoll, President, International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers**

“The airborne pandemic has laid bare the devastating inequities in our nation’s schools. School occupants are primarily women and children and the facilities are more densely occupied than nursing homes. The poorest communities hardest hit by the pandemic – Black, LatinX and Native American - endure the worst facilities. To heal the nation, Congress must invest in the capacity of states, tribes, and schools to sustain healthful indoor air/environments and it must invest in the wise rebuilding of public school infrastructure so that schools become both pandemic- and climate-resilient.” – **Claire L. Barnett, MBA, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network**

While Congress included emergency repairs for facilities as an allowable use in the COVID relief packages, it did not address the long-standing need for whole school modernizations, particularly in our low wealth, rural, and high need communities. Evidence and research prove that school facilities are critical to the health, safety, and equitable learning opportunities for students and our government must make long term investments to rebuild America's dilapidated school buildings so that the 55 million educators and students that spend their days in these classrooms can thrive, educationally and emotionally. BASIC urges Congress to pass the reconciliation bill with \$100 billion in direct grants to revitalize schools in every single district in the nation.

**Download the full report at:** [www.stateofourschools2021.org](http://www.stateofourschools2021.org)

**Download the report overview:** [www.buildusschools.org/resources](http://www.buildusschools.org/resources)

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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.

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