



HEALS ACT FALLS SHORT: School Infrastructure Coalition Calls for \$10 Billion for Facilities to Reopen Schools Safely

Washington D.C., July 28, 2020: On Behalf of the [Re]Build America's School Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC)--The proposed HEALS Act falls short of what is critically needed to reopen school facilities safely and get children back on site--the final package must provide an additional \$10 billion--the bare minimum of funds to help accomplish this.

Long before the President and Congress turned their attention to schools, states and districts have been working hard to figure out how to reopen safely. Every [state has guidance](#) for their school districts on reopening and in nearly every plan recommendations are included on screening, masks, hand washing, physical distancing, cleaning, and improving ventilation.

"Numerous school staff surveys and interviews make clear that schools are not adequately prepared to reopen due to health and safety risks." said Carey Cunningham, President of the Administrators Association of the St. Louis Public Schools, AFSA Local 44. "With the number of coronavirus cases on the rise in many cities, it is critical that districts also have funding for the facilities repairs and system upgrades that will reduce the risk for spreading the virus in a brick-and-mortar setting."

A [2020 GAO report on school facilities](#) found that 54% of U.S. public school districts, including those in federally impacted districts, have 2 or more major building systems needing to be upgraded or replaced in many of their schools. This means there are thousands of schools with inadequate ventilation from outdated HVAC systems and windows that can't open, lavatories in poor condition so students and staff can't keep their hands clean, roof leaks causing flaking plaster and paint that falls on surfaces, making cleaning and disinfecting more difficult--among many other health and safety challenges.

Mary Filardo, head of the BASIC coalition stated: "School facilities in poor condition in low income communities will not be able to follow CDC and state public health guidance to reopen safely without federal funds. Our public schools need \$10 billion for emergency school repairs and system upgrades from the COVID-19 relief package.

The \$10 billion in emergency repair and system upgrade funds would provide an average of \$400,000 per school for about 25,000 schools in the poorest condition. Districts need to be able to encumber these funds now, so facilities repairs and system upgrades can begin immediately and schools serving millions of children and youth in low-income communities can be reopened safely.

Lastly, Congress shouldn't stop there--schools all across the country continue to remain in decrepit condition, especially in low income districts--in rural, urban and suburban communities--do not have the resources to make major repairs, modernize, or build new schools. In order to build more resilient schools for the future, Congress must make a major longer-term investment and enact the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act (RRASA), which includes \$100 billion in grants and \$30 billion in subsidized bonds to repair the nation's schools in the worst condition and in the communities least able to afford these investments.

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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.

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