



March 20, 2019

The Honorable Richard E. Neal
Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
2309 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2101

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of our three million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to submit for the record the following comments in connection with the March 6 hearing, “Our Nation’s Crumbling Infrastructure and the Need for Immediate Action.”

Any initiative to rebuild America’s infrastructure must include the public schools that educate 90 percent of our students.

Poor conditions undermine student learning

- According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), the average public school building in the United States is 44 years old.
- The [2017 Infrastructure Report Card](#) of the American Society of Civil Engineers gives the condition of America’s 100,000 public school buildings an overall grade of D+.
- The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) attributes poor indoor air quality in more than 60,000 schools to cockroaches, rodents, dust mites, fungi, and respiratory irritants from sources of formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide.
- A [2017 EducationSuperHighway](#) report found that over 19,000 schools serving 11.6 million students “are without the minimum connectivity necessary for digital learning.”

What educators would like to see

- We urge you to restore Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs), which were eliminated by the 2017 GOP tax bill, and permanently increase the national limit to \$1.4 billion per year. QZABs allow qualifying schools to finance renovations, repairs, and investments in technology at below-market rates — sometimes, as low as zero.
- We also urge you to address the pressing need to improve America’s public school infrastructure, especially high-poverty schools whose facilities pose health and safety risks to students and staff. This effort should include expanding access to high-speed broadband sufficient for digital learning, especially in rural areas.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments and stand ready to work with you to attain these goals.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association