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January 28, 2020

Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our three million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to submit for the record the comments below in connection with tomorrow's hearing, "Paving the Way for Funding and Financing Infrastructure Investments." In addition, going forward, we strongly urge you to include rebuilding and modernizing public school facilities in any infrastructure package that comes before this committee.

Poor conditions undermine student learning

America spends more on public school facilities than any part of our infrastructure except roads and highways. Yet many of our 100,000 public school buildings are poorly equipped or in poor physical condition—so poor it undermines student learning. Here are the facts:

- Half our public schools are more than 50 years old, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.
- The overall condition of America's public schools is a D+, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2017 infrastructure report card.
- Nearly half our public schools have poor air quality, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Many public schools, especially in rural areas, still do not have access to high-speed broadband sufficient 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