

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-232, Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-204, Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
1102 Longworth, Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
1139 Longworth, Washington D.C. 20515

June 16, 2020

Dear Representatives Pelosi, McCarthy, Neal, Brady:

On behalf of the [Re] Build America School Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC), the Rebuild America's Schools Coalition (RAS) and the undersigned organizations we urge you to include the Rebuild America's Schools Act (RASA) in HR 2. The inclusion of RASA would provide immediate help to our nation's public schools as they seek to reopen this fall, create jobs in communities hard hit by the economic downturn, and help address structural inequities in the condition of our nation's K-12 public education infrastructure. We respectfully request that you include these specific priorities:

- Direct \$20 billion annually per year over the next 5 years for school infrastructure funds, beginning in FY 20, to states, DC, PR, BIE, and other territories which would require a 10% state level match to federal funds within 10 years, and give local school districts up to 10 years to expend the funds.
- Provide quick federal appropriation and allocation to states in the 2020-21 school year so that low wealth and high need districts will be able to improve school facilities, and ensure facilities are not a barrier to healthy and safe school building operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Provisions in all infrastructure financing specifically identifying public education as an eligible use, and providing targeted bond subsidies for public education. This is necessary because it will give local school districts, including low wealth communities, access to a variety of tools to leverage local and state funding capacity that will make progress against decades of structural under-funding of public school facilities.

A comprehensive local, state, and federal partnership to modernize our nation's public school facilities infrastructure with direct grants and infrastructure bond financing support offers

Congress the opportunity to address structural inequities and institutional racism. This issue has plagued American public education, in part due to the massive overreliance on local property taxes to fund capital spending. A national survey (1995-2004) of 146,000 school improvement projects concluded that schools in high wealth zip codes spent three times more than schools in the lowest wealth school districts. Local school districts have paid for 82% of school construction costs in the last two decades carrying \$450 billion in long term debt; on average \$9,000 per student at the end of FY2017. In some cases, low-income school districts have been unable to put up the 10% match to draw state dollars.

In the last few weeks the people of this nation have made it abundantly clear that they are no longer willing to accept a status-quo that continues to maintain racial inequality, a disparity which is reflected in our nation's public education infrastructure. For decades, the federal government has been part of the local and state partnership to address inequity in America's classrooms through the Title I program. However, there has been no federal program to address the longstanding inequities in capital outlay for school facilities.

Congress can now address the structural inequalities in school facilities by including RASA in an infrastructure and economic stimulus package and appropriating \$20 billion per-year over the next five years for school facilities and providing targeted infrastructure bonding subsidies for public education.

The need to improve our nation's school facilities is critical as states and local school districts prepare to reopen school for students, teachers, and staff in a changing COVID-19 environment. Investing in school facilities addresses an acute need to build, repair, renovate and modernize schools and also generate much needed jobs in local communities in every state across the country.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and stand ready to mobilize our members and our colleagues in the civic, labor and business community to support your continuing efforts to respond to COVID-19, rebuild our economy, and increase equity in American education.

CC: The Honorable Bobby Scott

CC: The Honorable Virginia Foxx

Sincerely,

[Re] Build America's School Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC)
21st Century School Fund

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
AESA, The Association of Education Service Agencies
American Federation for School Administrators (AFSA)
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
BlueGreen Alliance
Californians for School Facilities
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Children & Nature Network
Education Market Association
Fast Growth School Coalition
Green Schoolyards America
Greenbank Associates
International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
KABOOM!
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association for Music Education
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Council on School Facilities
National Education Association
National PTA
National School Boards Association
National Wildlife Federation
North American Association for Environmental Education
NREA, The National Rural Education Association
NREAC, The National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
Teach For America
The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)
U.S. Green Building Council