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August 4, 2021

U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they teach and support in 14,000 communities, we urge you to vote YES on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (H.R. 3684). Votes on this issue may be included in the NEA Report Card for the 117th Congress.

The bipartisan infrastructure bill contains several provisions to help create safe, healthy school environments that support student learning and growth. These include:

- Extending the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act for three years, and rebasing the funding level for fiscal year 2021 and subsequent fiscal years to the amount from fiscal year 2017, thereby eliminating the 5-percent funding reduction in the program;
- Beginning the process to eliminate lead service lines and pipes across the nation, an important step in delivering clean drinking water to more than 400,000 schools and child care facilities, including those in Tribal nations and disadvantaged communities;
- Electrifying thousands of school and transit buses across the country to reduce harmful emissions and drive domestic manufacturing of zero-emission vehicles and components;
- Funding for a \$500-million energy efficiency program to begin the process of modernizing and improving school facilities; and
- Efforts to expand the availability, affordability, and reliability of broadband to provide students and families with full access to our 21st-century education system and economy.

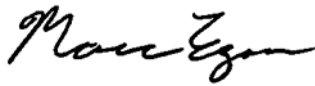
While we acknowledge the inclusion of these provisions, it is disappointing that this historic bill almost completely ignores one of the nation's largest infrastructure elements: our school buildings. Following completion of this legislation, we urge you to immediately take the necessary steps to rectify that omission in the forthcoming budget resolution and budget reconciliation measures, as much more is needed. The "[State of our Schools](#)" report, issued in 2016, showed an annual shortfall of nearly \$50 billion in school infrastructure funding. This shortfall has almost certainly worsened in the past five years, forcing millions of students into obsolete, dilapidated facilities that impact learning and risk students' and educators' health.

Moreover, with COVID cases on the rise in many communities, it is imperative that schools have the funding to repair and replace outdated ventilation systems—especially given a [General Accounting Office](#) report released a year ago that estimated 54 percent of all school districts need to replace multiple systems in their schools, with HVAC systems topping the list. For this reason, we urge you to include in reconciliation the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act, which would invest \$130 billion in school modernization and improvement.

In addition to addressing school modernization, we urge you to utilize the budget resolution/reconciliation measure to ensure healthy school meals for all students; tackle college affordability—which as noted in [recent NEA policy recommendations on the educator pipeline](#) would also address educator recruitment and retention issues; create a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and DACA recipients; extend and make permanent recent improvements to the child tax credit; and reform our tax code to ensure corporations and the wealthiest pay their fair share.

This is a crucial time for our country. We can either endeavor to meet our challenges by investing in infrastructure, public services, and our people, or watch our opportunity for progress slip away. Please vote YES on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and immediately turn your attention to a robust budget resolution and reconciliation bill that fully invests in infrastructure, families, and education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association