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November 4, 2021

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we urge you to VOTE YES on upcoming landmark legislation to invest in the nation's people and infrastructure. Votes associated with the entirety of the administration's Build Back Better agenda—including the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (H.R. 3684) and the Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376)—may be included in NEA's Report Card for the 117th Congress.

America is at a historic juncture. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity—a chance for meaningful action on long-ignored challenges ranging from how we care for those who are ill or have fallen on hard times to ensuring every neighborhood has safe drinking water. The failure to act has, for too long, limited the opportunities of millions of Americans, particularly in Black, brown, Indigenous, and rural communities. We urge you to support the entire Build Back Better agenda for the sake of the educators we represent, for the students who will drive our future, and for the families, friends, and colleagues who nourish and support them. For all of us.

NEA supports the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). In particular, we are pleased that the bill extends the Secure Rural Schools program, begins to eliminate the lead service lines and pipes remaining in schools and child care facilities, and provides the means to electrify thousands of school buses to reduce harmful emissions.

NEA supports the Build Back Better Act (BBBA) and applauds its investments in children, families, and communities. As educators, we are especially pleased by provisions of the bill that address these critical areas:

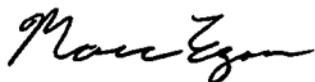
- **Child nutrition**—more schools able to offer free, healthy meals to all their students through the Community Eligibility Provision; summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program extended nationwide to all students receiving free or reduced-price school meals; investments in school kitchen equipment and healthy school meals
- **Connectivity**—more funding for the E-Rate's Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) to continue the American Rescue Plan's historic investment in helping students beat the homework gap and digital divide
- **Early education**—universal pre-kindergarten for 3- and 4-year-olds

- **Educator workforce**—invest in educator recruitment and retention to address shortages and diversify the profession, including Grow Your Own programs and teacher residencies
- **Higher education**—make college more affordable with bigger Pell grants and institutional aid for HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions
- **Health care**—close the Medicaid coverage gap for 4 million people; expand Medicare to cover hearing care; reduce health coverage premiums for 9 million people by further strengthening the Affordable Care Act; lower the cost of some prescription drugs and reduce Part D co-payments for Medicare beneficiaries
- **Housing**—create more equitable communities with the single largest investment in affordable housing in U.S. history and support for community-led programs
- **Immigration**—\$100 billion investment in reform and enhancements to reduce backlogs, expand legal representation, and make the asylum system more just and humane
- **Paid leave**—starting in 2024, up to 4 weeks off to care for a newborn, other family members, or deal with an illness or injury
- **Taxation**—extend the Child Tax Credit (CTC) that has cut child poverty in half, make the refundable CTC permanent for those who need it most, and ensure the largest corporations and wealthiest individuals pay a fairer share of taxes

While recognizing that negotiating this legislation has required many difficult decisions, we are deeply disappointed that meaningful investment in school construction and modernization is not part of either the Infrastructure and Jobs Act or the Build Back Better Act. Schools are the second largest infrastructure sector in America, after highways and bridges. They are spaces for cultivating critical thinking and nurturing students' dreams, as well as gathering places that are especially important in historically neglected and underserved communities.

Nevertheless, these bills take historic steps to improve the lives of—and provide new opportunities for—students, educators, and families across the country. We urge you to meet the moment with courage and vision. Please support swift passage of both the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Build Back Better Act.

Sincerely,



Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association