

***Letter to Congressional leadership in both houses asking that schools be included in the infrastructure plan and making the case for why this will be good for addressing climate change, environmental justice, climate resiliency and a greener, more equitable and more future-ready workforce.***

Dear Majority Leader Schumer

Dear Minority Leader McConnell

Dear Speaker Pelosi

Dear Minority Leader McCarthy

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request that you include $100 billion in grants and $30 billion in bonds for schools under the auspices of the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act (RRASA), in your emerging multi-part national infrastructure plan.

We recognize that the proposed bipartisan package is currently focused mostly on transportation and utilities but we maintain that schools, particularly those in lower income areas, simply must be included in the overall congressional plan for infrastructure. America’s [Infrastructure Report Card](https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/schools/) documents that public K-12 schools are the second largest sector of U.S. public infrastructure spending after highways.

Close to one third of the nation’s 100,000 public K-12 schools and many of our tribal schools are over-crowded and in highly deteriorated condition; surprisingly, most of these schools are situated in low income areas. These schools have suffered from long standing funding shortages that, in many cases, trace back to race-based neighborhood red-lining practices initiated in the 1930s. These practices, along with other inequities, have heavily impacted real estate values and the related tax base which is a traditional source of funding for public schools nationwide. The emerging national infrastructure plan offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these schools to come up to more acceptable standards and provide a safe, wholesome and well-designed learning environment for students in lower income areas. This will make a huge difference in educational attainment and future career development.

The undersigned organizations feel, in particular, that including schools in the Congress’s emerging multi-part national infrastructure proposal will significantly help position the United States to develop an enlightened and skillful workforce ready to address the challenges and economic opportunities of climate change and contribute to a more sustainable economic future. This can occur through a range of new technical capabilities, new thinking and much-needed innovations. These would include such sectors as alternative energy development and distribution, sustainable agriculture, energy-efficient transportation and housing, forestry, more sustainable business enterprises, new consumerism and more.

The refurbished schools can themselves be models of sustainable green building practices, support environmental health and safety such as indoor air quality and reduction of toxic substance exposures, be designed to be climate resilient, and can support a range of educational ventures and content to build a greener, more equitable and more future-ready workforce, and more enlightened and capable decisionmakers.

On a practical level, refurbished schools will save many billions of public dollars in the long term by being more energy and water efficient, contributing to reduced healthcare costs and reducing maintenance and repair expenses.

Incorporating the Reopen and Rebuild America’s School Act funding in the Congress’s infrastructure proposal would annually improve the lives of nearly on half (approximately 25 million) of all K-12 students and their educators each year. Over the course of ten years some 60 million young people would have an improved opportunity to become highly productive and innovative contributors to American society and the economy. Importantly, rebuilding U.S. schools to be environmentally safe, green and energy efficient, and more climate-resilient would be able to have a K-12 public education system that serves as solid platform for a cleaner and more sustainable and more equitable economy and future.

Again, we request that you include K-12 schools, in your emerging, multi-part infrastructure proposal.

Respectfully,

Organizations