

May 17, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
371 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer:

National PTA is writing to express our support for the inclusion of school facilities in any infrastructure package taken up by Congress. National PTA is comprised of over 3 million parents, teachers and other child advocates who work toward improving education, health and safety for all children. Considering recent media reports of infrastructure negotiations between Congressional leadership and the Administration, we want to reiterate that schools are a critical part of our nation's infrastructure. We urge Congress to prioritize investments to repair, renovate and modernize school facilities to ensure they are safe, healthy and well-equipped to advance student achievement, grow our economy and improve our competitiveness.

There are about 100,000 public K-12 school facilities across the country. On any given school day, about 20% of Americans spend time in a school building. However, the average public school is nearly 50 years old. Local districts and states have endured the vast majority of costs associated with school infrastructure needs. In recent history, the federal government has provided virtually no support for school infrastructure. Due to this, school infrastructure has largely remained a local issue and we believe now is the time to explore how best to utilize local, state and federal resources to improve school facilities. However, even if local districts find innovative and creative ways to finance infrastructure projects, some districts will inevitably be left behind.¹ Similar to the federal role in upgrading roads and bridges, there must be a federal role to help eliminate the extreme inequities that currently exist in school facilities.¹ A growing body of

¹ Center for Green Schools, 21st Century School Fund & National Council on School Facilities (2016). State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities report. Retrieved from <https://kapost-files-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/published/56f02c3d626415b792000008/2016-state-of-our-schools-report.pdf?kui=wo7vkgV0wW0LGSjxek0N5A>

research shows that high-quality facilities help improve academic achievement, reduce student and staff absences, and reduce suspensions. Despite the positive effects of adequate facilities, far too many children and adults are in schools that are unsafe and unhealthy.

Investments in school infrastructure would also benefit the American worker. According to an Economic Policy Institute analysis, 17,785 jobs would be generated by each \$1 billion investment in the construction sector.² America's business leaders are also supportive of investments in infrastructure. In a macroeconomic modeling study conducted by the Business Roundtable, they found that an additional 1.1 million jobs, largely in construction, would be created by year 10 of the policy scenario.³ These studies highlight the potential positive economic benefit to American workers engaged in school infrastructure projects. If school infrastructure is left unaddressed, not only is the health of our students at risk, but learning opportunities are diminished, which jeopardizes their educational and economic futures, as well as the future of our nation's economy and workforce. Our nation's history is one of great investment in infrastructure. Let's continue this investment in order to enhance economic outcomes for both students and workers.

We applaud Congressional leadership and the Administration for beginning the overdue discussion on improvements to our nation's infrastructure. However, as these discussions continue, we urge you to include school facilities as part of any comprehensive infrastructure bill. National PTA firmly believes that the long-term success of our nation depends on robust and equitable public investments in public education, including school infrastructure. Our association has long advocated to ensure all children have access to schools that improve their overall well-being and help them achieve academic success.

Thank you for your attention to our views and for supporting our nation's students.

Sincerely,



James L. Accomando
President
National PTA



Nathan R. Monell, CAE
Executive Director
National PTA

² Josh Bivens & Hunter Blair (2016). A public investment agenda that delivers the goods for American workers needs to be long-lived, broad, and subject to democratic oversight. Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/files/pdf/117041.pdf>

³ Business Roundtable (2019). Delivering for America: The macroeconomic impacts of reinvesting in America's infrastructure systems. Retrieved from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/brt.org/BRT-InfrastructureReport12052018.pdf>