Coalition *for* Healthier Schools

...providing the national platform and the forum for environmental health at school, since 2001...

Coordinated by Healthy Schools Network

To: House and Senate Majority Leadership and Environment Committees
Date: Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Build Back Better Falls Short: Children, Their Schools, and Communities at Risk

The Infrastructure Act and in the Build Back Better Act do not include federal funds to Re-Build America's Schools. Therefore, we call on Congress to rapidly expand funding for US EPA's Office of Air/Indoor Environments Division proven grants programs that address managing K-12 school buildings and grounds (infrastructure) and improving children's health and learning (Office of Children's Health).

IMPROVING SCHOOL FACILITIES can have a 400% payback in asthma, cold, and flu reduction, and teacher retention (Kats 2006).

Regarding BBBA: the few provisions for public schools facilities that provide funding for remediating lead in school drinking water, purchasing kitchen equipment (stipulate electric stoves); monitoring, and reducing air pollution at public schools, and air quality monitoring in fence line communities – we support those. But most critical now is expanding EPA's national and regional grants programs that have increased awareness and led dozens of states, and tribes, cities, and communities to adopt policies and add funds for school facilities. EPA grants provide training and technical assistance on best practices to identify and fix environmental issues and guidance to improve children's environmental health.

Build Back Better FALLS SHORT: US EPA needs $1.15/child/year

NYS environment agency cleans out mismanaged school chemicals →

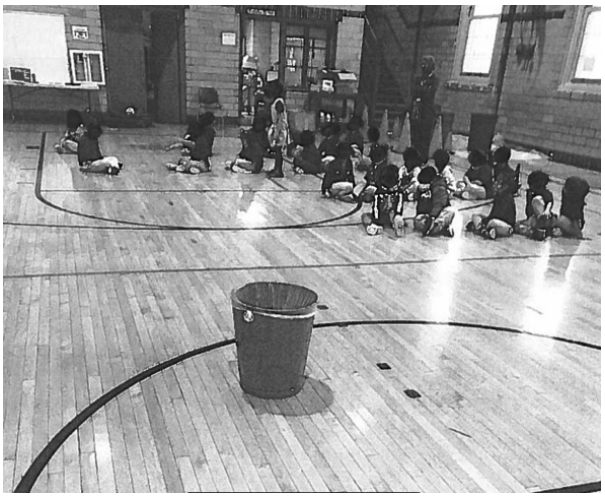
- The $50M included for EPA to address air pollution in schools is too scant to address the deep needs of schools and communities in a warming climate that will worsen indoor air.
- Glaring omissions in the proposed BBBA:
  - Toxics in Schools at $50M omitted (and too scant) given legacy toxics of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), lead in paint, asbestos, mercury, and stores of mismanaged hazardous chemicals.
  - There is no EPA funding designated to assist schools with climate resiliency and mitigation, yet schools are the second largest form of all public construction after roads.
  - There is no support for EPA's Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units that consult with families, communities, and agencies on preventing children's environmental exposures.

← Hurricane Ida Damages NJ school

Schools are not Climate or COVID-Ready: Children Are at Risk

The nation's 100,000 **public school buildings provide $8 Billion Ft2 of learning space and are valued at $2.8 Trillion.** In fact, most could not implement CDC's reopening guidance (US GBC 2021); more than half of schools need new air handling systems (US GAO 2020,) and many still have urgent concerns about ventilation and air conditioning (ED Week 2021). **Fifty million children** are especially vulnerable to polluted indoor air; **40% of students have chronic health conditions such as asthma, an occupational risk for teachers and custodians as well.**

Vonnie Good, a school Environmental Health specialist in Oregon: "*I applied for and received a grant to train a person in each of our ninety buildings on the EPA Tools for Schools program. It made a HUGE difference in awareness of environmental health factors. And, we have worked hard to use our construction bonds to improve our buildings, focusing on health and safety."* See full quote on reverse



Visit US EPA's Healthy Schools Programs

www.epa.gov/schools

← *Watery NJ school gym.*

Damp school buildings cause of rigger asthma.

Vonnie B. Good, Environmental Health Specialist, Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem, Oregon
When I began my career in 1998 as the environmental health specialist in Oregon's second longest school district, I was armed with a degree in microbiology, but no indoor air quality experience. I attended my first EPA Tools for Schools Symposium in Washington, DC just a few months later.

Boy, did I learn a lot! I attended every symposium from that time until they were discontinued. Every single year, I gained more knowledge about how to keep our students and staff safe in our buildings. I learned the real-life cost of "deferred maintenance.

And about the following environmental health topics: Radon, Mold, Ventilation, IPM, Acoustics,
Lighting. I applied for and received a grant to train a person in each of our ninety buildings on the EPA Tools for Schools program. It made a HUGE difference in awareness of environmental health factors. And, we have worked hard to use our construction bonds to improve our buildings, focusing on health and safety.

I would DEFINITELY say that the knowledge gained from EPA's Tools for Schools Symposia continues to make a difference in the education of students in Salem-Keizer Public Schools.

November 2021

Dirty custodial closet; moldy cubby for hats and coats; 40# of elemental mercury; bird droppings on floor; PCBs; closed water fountain; mismanaged chemicals.