



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 31, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

We write to highlight our serious concern over the dire condition of many of our nation's schools, including those we represent in Philadelphia. We strongly urge you to take aggressive, immediate action to address this critical problem by including a major investment of federal funds for school maintenance in any infrastructure plan. We believe such investment is long overdue, and failing to do so directly threatens the health and safety of communities across the country.

A highly disturbing series of articles published recently in the Philadelphia Inquirer described in graphic terms the poor conditions of many of Philadelphia's schools, and the resultant exposure to lead dust and paint, asbestos, rodent waste and mold that school children and their teachers experience every day. It is well known that exposure to many of these elements can lead to tragic short- and long-term health complications. A school should be a safe space for learning and growth. No student or teacher should be subjected to such abhorrent and unsafe conditions. Unfortunately, these conditions are not unique to Philadelphia.

Public schools are the bedrock of our nation's educational system. Not only do they educate our students in order to compete in the global economy, but they also provide important supplemental programming, such as afterschool sports programs that help our students learn and grow. It is clear that public schools play an important role in the physical and cognitive development of our nation's children; however, despite their importance, inadequate funding has led to outdated and unsafe school buildings. Thus, far too many of our students are forced to go to schools with crumbling infrastructure, which exposes them and their teachers on a daily basis to serious health and safety hazards.

While the responsibility for school buildings has historically fallen on local school boards and their taxpayers, the problems have risen to a level that we cannot ignore or brush off as merely a local problem. Many superintendents and school boards cannot generate adequate local and state tax revenues to meet the ongoing maintenance needs, no less renovate and replace buildings. These local leaders are asking for federal help – for a modest and targeted federal investment to leverage local and state funds to address at least the most extreme of these conditions in the school districts that need it the most.

The impact of failing to address this dire need will be compounded. As these schools age further and fall into even worse repair, the costs of addressing them will exponentially increase, ultimately ensuring the need may never be met. The result will expose another generation of children to serious health risks and poor learning environments.

We urge you to include a major investment of federal funds for school buildings in any infrastructure plan the Administration and Congress pursues, and to make this an urgent legislative priority this year. Thank you for your consideration of our views, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Robert Brady
Member of Congress



Brendan Boyle
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress