

January 21, 2022

The Honorable Miguel Cardona  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

On behalf of a broad and diverse coalition of education, health, environmental, labor, and industry organizations, we urge the U.S. Department of Education to expeditiously consider how it can extend the timeline school districts have to expend funding for school construction and capital projects under the American Rescue Plan through December 2026.

The Department has played an unprecedented role in supporting school districts throughout this pandemic, and it is in every American taxpayer's interest to ensure that the federal funding can be spent in the most effective way possible. Because ARP is one-time funding, updating school facilities to ensure healthier and safer environments and the best possible utilization of classroom space is among the wisest and most consequential investment decisions districts can make. However, if the timeline for ARP funding is not extended, then critical school facility upgrades and major capital improvements may not be a possibility for many districts across the country.

Currently, school districts are on a tight timeline to spend ARP funding for school facilities improvements such as heating ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) replacement, roofing, , window and door replacements, and retrofitting classrooms and buildings, as the deadline to obligate ARP funds is September 2024. Generally, districts are spending ARP funds to stem learning loss, provide additional mental health services, expand learning time, provide professional development, and on other critical K-12 initiatives. But because many districts were expecting to receive standalone school facilities funding through either the Build Back Better Act or the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that unfortunately did not come to fruition, many are now eager to find ways to utilize the American Rescue Plan funds for significant and sorely needed school facility and renovation projects. Unfortunately, the ability to utilize ARP funds for these facility upgrades under the current deadline will be nearly impossible for most districts because limited contractor availability and supply chain disruptions are substantial and expected to get worse in 2022.

More flexibility to spend money on school construction has no budgetary impact on the federal government, but it does enable districts to invest ARP funding in a way that will benefit children and their communities for years into the future. School buildings are not just used to educate K-12 students; they are voting sites, clinics, and serve many other community purposes. Improved

school facilities will not only assist in improving learning and teaching conditions for students and educators, but also allow our schools to continue to be the hub of community life.

We urge you to consider this request that will further the success of federal investments in K-12 schools.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
American Federation of School Administrators  
American Library Association  
Association of Educational Service Agencies  
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)  
Build America's School Infrastructure Coalition  
Council of Chief State School Officers  
Children & Nature Network  
CMTA Engineers  
Council of Administrators of Special Education  
Education Market Association  
Go Green Initiative  
Green Guardians  
Green Schools National Network  
Greenbank Associates  
Healthy Schools Campaign  
Healthy Schools Network  
Impact Fitness Foundation  
International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers  
International WELL Building Institute  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Association of State Boards of Education  
National Council on School Facilities  
National Rural Education Association  
National School Boards Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
North American Association for Environmental Education  
Sierra Club's 100% Clean Energy School Districts Campaign  
SMART California Sheet Metal Workers' Local 104  
UndauntedK12