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FOUNDERS

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February 22, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
Chairman  
House Education and Labor Committee  
2167 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Ranking Member  
House Education and Labor Committee  
2167 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx,

On behalf of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a national nonprofit representing nearly 10,000 member companies and organizations committed to cost-effective and high-performing buildings, I write to provide comments for the hearing "Underpaid Teachers and Crumbling Schools: How Underfunding Public Education Shortchanges America's Students." We commend the Education and Labor Committee for convening this hearing. We urge the Committee and Congress act swiftly to help improve the condition of school facilities across the country.

**School Facility Need:**

In 2016 the [Center for Green Schools](#) at the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) (USGBC), the [21st Century School Fund](#) and the [National Council on School Facilities](#) released the State of Our Schools report. The report compares historic spending levels to the investment to maintain today's school building inventory and finds a projected gap of \$46 billion the nation must overcome to provide healthy, safe, and adequate school facilities for our children and teachers<sup>1</sup>. The report identifies four key strategies for addressing the structural deficits in the K–12 public education infrastructure:

- Understand public school facilities conditions and provide communities access to accurate data about school facilities.
- Engage in education facilities planning using best practices from across the country and support local communities in proposing creative and practical plans to improve their public school facilities.
- Support new public funding to provide what is needed to build and maintain adequate and equitable school facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> 21st Century Schools Fund Inc., U.S. Green Building Council Inc., and National Council on School Facilities, "State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities" (Washington: 2016), available at <https://kapost-files-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/published/56f02c3d626415b792000008/2016-state-of-our-schools-report.pdf?kui=wo7vkgV0wWOLGSjxekON5A>.



- Leverage public and private resources to extend a community's investments utilizing a new generation of structures, funding streams and partnerships.

We believe that Congress has an opportunity to act on these recommendations to help improve the condition of school facilities while providing additional benefits to communities across the country.

#### **About USGBC and LEED:**

USGBC is a nonprofit organization committed to transforming the way all buildings and communities are designed, built and operated to enable a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous environment that improves the quality of life for all. Representing the full range of the building sector, including builders, product manufacturers, professional firms, and real estate USGBC members are involved in all facets of the building industry. USGBC is perhaps best known as the developer of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system, administered by USGBC and our sister organization, Green Business Certification, Inc. (GBCI).

LEED is the industry standard in high performance building and is demonstrated to reduce utility consumption and related costs for private and public sector owners and operators. Both private businesses and public sector facilities has embraced LEED certification. As an independent third party certification holds participants accountable to meet clearly defined goals that optimize building performance<sup>2</sup>. LEED buildings perform better across the board than conventional buildings and continue to raise the bar in energy and water savings and waste reduction. There are many studies demonstrating these benefits but more recent examples include:

- In 2018 the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) examined 200 buildings (many of them LEED certified) over a three year period, finding that compared to legacy buildings, GSA's high performing buildings show: 23% less energy use, 28% water use, 23% less building operating expenses, and a 9% decrease in waste<sup>3</sup>.
- In 2016 the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services report of 29 LEED buildings found that by implementing green building practices, state agencies and higher educational facilities reduced their energy use by an overall average of 37%<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> GAO-15-667, Page 17

<sup>3</sup> U.S. General Services Administration, "The Impact of High-Performance Buildings" (June: 2018), available at [https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/GSA%20Impact%20of%20HPB%20Paper%20June%202018\\_508-2%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/GSA%20Impact%20of%20HPB%20Paper%20June%202018_508-2%20(1).pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Washington State Department of Enterprise Services, "High Performance Public Green Buildings Implementation of RCW 39.35D Through July 2016" (September 2016), available at:



- In 2018 the Metropolitan Government of Nashville, Department of General Services, examined the performance and operation of its 20 LEED buildings (including firehouse, education facilities and government offices). It found that the department's LEED buildings avoided energy costs of more than \$493,000 and saved 9.7 million gallons of water compared to similar non-LEED buildings.<sup>5</sup>

While many credits directly address a project's energy and water use, numerous others substantially contribute to the overall durability and resilience of a building. In fact, a 2018 study<sup>6</sup> by the University of Texas at San Antonio found that 64.8% of all LEED v4 credits contribute to increased resilience against flooding and 63% of credits enhance resilience to hurricanes or typhoons – affirming LEED's value in helping projects withstand natural disasters.

For these reasons and others it is no wonder that LEED certification has been embraced. As of January there are over 96,000 registered and certified projects in all fifty states and over 160 countries<sup>7</sup>.

#### **LEED and School Facilities:**

The use of LEED certification as a means of demonstrating high performance in schools is strong. Indeed, there are over 4,000<sup>8</sup> registered and certified across the globe. In reviewing U.S. school investments made in 2017 and 2018 we found that approximately 10% were LEED certified.<sup>9</sup> This demonstrates the certification is already being widely adopted by states and local education agencies (LEA)s across the country.

For example:

- Since 2007 the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) has used LEED for modernizing and constructing K-12 facilities. As of late 2018 OSFC has built and certified 325<sup>10</sup> LEED schools across the state with more to come. OSFC reports

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[https://des.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/Facilities/Energy/Green\\_Website/GreenBuildingReport2016.pdf?#a53c1](https://des.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/Facilities/Energy/Green_Website/GreenBuildingReport2016.pdf?#a53c1)

<sup>5</sup> Metropolitan Government of Nashville, Department of General Services, "High Performance Building Report" (June 2018), available at:

<https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/GeneralServices/docs/reports/HighPerformanceBuildingReport-180629.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Langar and Bhattacharjee, "Focus of resilience within Building Rating Systems (BRS) LEED 4.0 Review" (January 2018), available at:

<https://portal.nibs.org/files/wl/?id=672qjVOPmTXtR8SqPwPP2DYyh97RcXK>

<sup>7</sup> LEED project data.

<sup>8</sup> Id.

<sup>9</sup> Calculation of LEED project data and Dodge Data construction starts for the education sector.

<sup>10</sup>The Ohio School Facilities Commission, "Green Schools" available at

<https://ofcc.ohio.gov/Services-Programs/Energy-Services/Green-Schools>



that projects are projected to reduce energy consumption by 33% and water use by 35%<sup>11</sup>. The program also has had a profound economic impact on the region. As of 2017, the OFCC spent approximately \$1.4 billion to purchase products and materials within 500 miles of each project, which supports local manufacturing in Ohio and the region<sup>12</sup>.

- Since 2008, the Colorado Department of Education's Office of Capital Construction has administered a competitive grant program known as the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST). The program, which uses LEED as a compliance option for new construction<sup>13</sup> and renovated facilities, has funded \$2.1 billion in school repairs and replacement/new construction of more than 500 schools across Colorado<sup>14</sup>. BEST has also been an economic engine. According to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs the program has supported roughly 37,000 jobs.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Legislative Recommendations:**

While there has been significant investment in school facilities more must be done to ensure that students learn in safe and healthy schools. To that end, USGBC supports legislative action to help achieve these outcomes.

USGBC supports "The Rebuild America's Schools Act," introduced by Rep. Scott. The bill would provide important investments through the creation of a competitive school construction grant program while restarting and making improvements to the Quality Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) program. The bill ensures that major modernizations or newly constructed facilities are built and certified to a high-performance standards which will help ensure that taxpayer funds are well spent and that schools are efficient and resilient.

While not in the jurisdiction of the committee, USGBC also supports broader financing options to fund school facilities. H.R. 1251 the "Public Buildings Renewal Act," introduced by Representatives Blumenauer and Kelly would expand the use of Private Activity Bonds (PAB)s to authorize public buildings (including schools) as an allowable use. These bonds allow public and private entities to work together to build and maintain a public infrastructure project. A study from the Beacon Hill Institute for Public

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<sup>11</sup> The Ohio School Facilities Commission "News & Announcements" available at:

<https://ofcc.ohio.gov/News-Events/News-Releases/ArticleID/43>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Division of Public School Capital Construction Assistance "PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITY CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES" available at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/ccaconstructionguidelines2017>

<sup>14</sup> Office of Capital Construction "Fact Sheet" available at:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/capitalconstruction-factsheet>

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*



Policy of similar legislation found that the policy change increase real Gross Domestic Product by \$8.285 billion and create 43,200 jobs in the first year<sup>16</sup> of enactment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Howard", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Bryan Howard  
Legislative Director  
U.S. Green Building Council

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<sup>16</sup> The Beacon Hill Institute "The Impact of Tax Exempt Financing on Public-Private Partnerships: A Dynamic Analysis" (October 2017) available at: <http://www.beaconhill.org/BHISTudies/2017-1026-PubPrivInf/BHI%20P3%20Report%20Final10242017.pdf>