



Coalition *for* Healthier Schools

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

Coordinated by Healthy Schools Network

May 17, 2017

Statement of Support

REBUILD AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT OF 2017

On behalf of more than 150 participating parent, public health, environment, and education groups in the Coalition, we offer our support for the REBUILD AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT OF 2017.

“Decayed schools erode children’s health, thinking, and learning, and undercut personnel productivity. The American Society of Civil Engineers awarded school infrastructure a D+ this year and a D in 2013. If your child had still had a D after four years, you would look for solutions. We support solutions and funds in the Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2017”, said the Coalition’s Coordinator, Claire L. Barnett, who is executive director of the Healthy Schools Network.

Ignored Too Long: children are not little adults; schools are not little offices. Some 50 million children attend public schools every day; they are the places where children spend the most time when they are not at home. Children are biologically more vulnerable to environmental hazards than adults are and their schools are four times more densely occupied than offices and have diverse operations. Years of research has shown that schools can increase attendance and achievement if their facilities can be kept clean, dry, and quiet, have good ventilation and thermal comfort, control dusts, and reduce harsh odors. School facility siting, design, construction, operations, and maintenance are critical but too often ignored.

The Coalition supports solutions to the challenges of maintaining, updating, and improving our schools as healthy places for children and personnel. It supports:

- the development of practical, problem-solving plans by the states to: 1- create and update an inventory of facilities, 2- identify and coordinate how various state agencies (health, environment, energy, labor, education) can assist schools, and 3- adopt policies to protect occupants of schools under demolition and reconstruction, as some states have done;
- federal funds to help reduce or eliminate well-known hazards in schools such as lead in water, PCBs, vapor intrusions, asbestos, molds, and more, and to help bring schools into compliance with safety and accessibility codes and regulations;
- high-performance/green school design standards that result in healthful, easy to clean and to maintain school buildings; and,
- the provision of federal grants and bonds to rebuild schools.

Background: see www.healthyschools.org, for a national state of the states’ data and policies report *Towards Healthy Schools: Reducing Risks to Children (2016)*, and a *Call to Action: Children and Infrastructure* policy paper.

Contact: Claire L. Barnett, (m) 202-543-7555.