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May 17, 2017

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Scott:

The Council of the Great City Schools is pleased to support the Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2017 for the long-term improvement of public school facilities – the first school infrastructure bill to be introduced in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. The nation’s major city public school districts have substantial construction, renovation, modernization, and deferred maintenance needs because of the age and size of their school buildings, overcrowding, and the need to devote substantial resources to instructional personnel to meet their core academic mission.

The Rebuild America’s Schools Act would help States and school districts address infrastructure needs in their highest poverty schools, and provides both facility bonds and grants for specific infrastructure and instructional improvements, including enhancing building safety, expanding facilities to allow for smaller class size, and increasing access to learning technologies. A 2011 survey from the Council found that 50 urban school districts had facility needs of approximately \$20.1 billion in new construction, \$61.4 billion in repair, renovation, and modernization, and \$19 billion in deferred maintenance costs, or some \$100.5 billion in total facilities needs.

This legislation will help high poverty school districts make long-needed upgrades to improve student learning, and would help put hundreds of thousands of Americans back to work in our nation’s biggest cities. The Rebuild America’s Schools Act also recognizes the benefits of the E-Rate program for schools and libraries, and protects the important technology upgrades that districts are making as a result of the program’s prioritization on 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.

Continuous federal investment in school modernization is necessary to address a recognized and established local need and will help more students receive a high quality education in safe, modern, and well-equipped buildings. The Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2017 will assist urban schools improve the learning environment for all students, and has the full support of the Council of the Great City Schools.

Sincerely,

Michael Casserly  
Executive Director