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Groundbreaking Schools Report Shows Systemic Inequity in a State-By-State Analysis of Investment in American School Infrastructure

New Report by the U.S. Green Building Council, 21st Century School Fund and National Council on School Facilities projects a \$46 billion annual deficit in U.S. school funding

Washington, D.C. — (March 23, 2016) — The [State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities report](#), released today by 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](#), shows that the nation faces a projected annual shortfall of \$46 billion in school funding, despite significant effort on the part of local communities.

“One out of every six people in the U.S. spends each day in a K-12 public school classroom, yet there is very little oversight over America’s public school buildings,” said [Rick Fedrizzi](#), CEO and founding chair, USGBC. “It is totally unacceptable that there are millions of students across the country who are learning in dilapidated, obsolete and unhealthy facilities that pose obstacles to their learning and overall wellbeing. U.S. public school infrastructure is funded through a system that is inequitably affecting our nation’s students and this has to change.”

The report features an in-depth state-by-state analysis of investment in school infrastructure and focuses on 20 years of school facility investment nationwide, as well as funding needed moving forward to make up for annual investment shortfalls for essential repairs and upgrades. The report also proposes recommendations for investments, innovations and reforms to improve learning environments for children in all U.S. public schools.

“The data on funding school infrastructure paints a clear picture of the importance of a national conversation regarding the way improvements are funded. The conversation surrounding student achievement must also include a component addressing the places where our children learn,” said Mike Rowland, president, National Council on School Facilities and director of Facilities Services for the Georgia Department of Education.

The report compares historic spending levels to the investment that will be needed moving forward to maintain today’s school building inventory. Estimated facilities investment requirements are based on building industry best practice standards that are adapted to public school infrastructure. This comparison reveals a projected gap of \$46

billion that we as a nation must overcome to provide healthy, safe, and adequate school facilities for our children. Only three states' average spending levels meet or exceed the standards for investment: Texas, Florida and Georgia.

The analysis found that the federal government provides almost no capital construction funding for school facilities, and state support for school facilities varies widely. Local school districts bear the heaviest burden in making the investments needed to build and improve school facilities. When school districts cannot afford to make these significant investments, they are often forced to make more frequent building repairs from their operating funds—the same budget that pays for teacher salaries, instructional materials and general programming.

Currently, six states (Massachusetts, Wyoming, Connecticut, Ohio, Kentucky and Hawaii) pay for all or nearly all of the capital construction costs for schools in their state, while 12 states (Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wisconsin) provide no direct support to districts for capital construction responsibilities. In the remaining 32 states, the levels of state support vary greatly, and the federal government contributes almost nothing to capital construction to help alleviate disparities.

“Even though K-12 schools are the largest public building sector in the U.S. and represent the second largest category of public infrastructure investment, there is no current dataset at a national level and many states could not report on the size of their public school inventory,” said Mary Filardo, author of the report and executive director, 21st Century School Fund.

The report highlights the need for better facilities information at the local, state and national levels. It has been more than 20 years since the federal government completed a comprehensive assessment of school facilities. At the time, more than half of U.S. schools had indoor air quality issues, and more than 15,000 schools were circulating air deemed unfit to breathe.

“The way we fund school infrastructure means that communities and states are working largely on their own to provide high-quality facilities. Without new funding models, schools in low-income areas will be unable to meet even the most basic standards for health and safety,” said [Rachel Gutter](#), director, Center for Green Schools at USGBC. “Federal, state and local level stakeholders – from senators to state legislators to superintendents, from community leaders to impact investors – must collaborate to solve this problem.”

Overall the report found that communities have been doing their best to address the conditions of their schools but are in need of additional support and more equitable funding. The State of Our Schools 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.
- Leverage public and private resources to extend a community's investments, utilizing a new generation of structures, funding streams, and partnerships.

To download the full *State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities* report, and to find out the conditions in your local school district, please visit: www.stateofourschools.org.

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About the Center for Green Schools

The Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council's mission is to make sure every student has the opportunity to attend a green school within this generation. The Center sits at the intersection of buildings, curriculum and community and works directly with teachers, students, administrators, elected officials and communities to create programs, resources and partnerships that transform all schools into healthy learning environments. High-performing schools result in high-performing students, and green schools go far beyond bricks and mortar. The Center advances opportunities to educate a new generation of leaders, including sustainability natives, capable of driving global market transformation. To learn more please visit <http://www.centerforgreenschools.org>.

About the National Council on School Facilities

The National Council on School Facilities is the nonprofit association representing the directors of state-level K–12 public school facilities agencies. The National Council works to represent the states' perspectives and experience regarding effective policy, planning, practice, regulation, finance, and management of school facilities. For more information, visit www.FacilitiesCouncil.org.

About the 21st Century School Fund

21st Century School Fund is a nonprofit research and advocacy organization focusing on K-12 public education. For over twenty years it has been a leader in providing innovative solutions, research, and policy in improving public school facilities. 21CSF was founded in 1994 on the premise that communities are responsible for creating healthy, safe, and educationally appropriate learning environments. For more information, visit www.21CSF.org.