

# Invest \$600 Billion in Green Public Buildings

## to Address Climate Change and Build Thriving Communities



# 1.2M

JOB<sup>S</sup> EACH YEAR  
COULD BE CREATED  
IN RETROFITTING  
SCHOOLS & HOUSING



# 29%

U.S. GREENHOUSE  
GAS EMISSIONS COME  
FROM RESIDENTIAL  
AND COMMERCIAL  
BUILDINGS

**Too much of our public building infrastructure – especially schools and publicly-supported housing – is unsafe, outdated, or crumbling.** The pandemic illustrated that poor ventilation in public housing and schools is deadly; similarly our outdated buildings need funding from the federal government to cope with climate extremes.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has given American public school buildings a near-failing grade of D+, citing unsafe buildings, HVAC systems in need of replacement, and other necessary upgrades to ensure students' safety, health, and comfort. **They estimate that at least \$380 billion** would be needed to raise that grade to a B. Rep. Jamaal Bowman has proposed going further with \$446 billion in investments to fund healthy, green, climate- friendly retrofits for K-12 public school facilities in greatest need.

**To fight climate change, protect communities' health, and create good jobs along the way, these investments in improving schools and housing should also include energy efficiency and clean energy retrofits.** Analysis by **Data for Progress estimates that \$154 billion would be needed to decarbonize the approximately one million units of public housing** across the country – upgrades that would also address lead, mold, and other health hazards.

## Cleaner buildings will help fight climate change.

Buildings in the United States use about **40% of the country's energy** for heating and cooling, lighting, and operating appliances – a number that rises with a full life-cycle assessment of buildings that includes the energy costs of manufacturing and transporting building construction materials. As of 2018, residential and commercial buildings accounted for about **29 percent of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions**. Decarbonizing and improving energy efficiency in public buildings would make an enormous impact on greenhouse gas emissions, and will be a critical step in America's fight against climate change.



**D+**

GRADE GIVEN TO U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

The country's 105,000 K-12 schools currently emit 78 million metric tons of CO2 each year; they use 8 percent of all the energy used by US buildings. Decarbonizing the country's K-12 schools would entirely eliminate that carbon pollution, the equivalent of taking 17 million cars off the road.

## Greening buildings will create good jobs.

Upgrading America's schools and housing will be an enormous undertaking – one that, as a result, will put millions of people to work. Economic analysis from the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst shows that a \$600 billion investment in energy efficiency, weatherization, electrification, and other building upgrades could create more than 1.2 million jobs each year. Pairing investments in building upgrades with strong **standards** that ensure good wages, the right to organize, and equitable hiring practices will usher in a clean energy transition that helps all Americans thrive.



**\$154B**

NEEDED TO ADDRESS CARBON, LEAD, MOLD, AND OTHER HEALTH HAZARDS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

## Investments in green buildings are investments in equity.

The students in America's most dilapidated public schools, and the residents of our crumbling public housing, are overwhelmingly low-income people of color. Majority Black, brown, or Indigenous school buildings are disproportionately likely to be aging, crowded, or contain harmful materials like asbestos or lead – disinvestment that contributes to worse educational outcomes in those schools when compared to whiter and wealthier districts. **Retrofitting and electrifying these schools and housing is a much-needed investment in racial, social, and economic justice.**

## Green buildings are popular.

Upgrading America's schools and housing improves health and comfort. They enable cuts to public buildings' carbon footprint to zero and make public buildings resilient to extreme weather.

Polling has shown that approximately half of Americans favor green retrofits of schools and support a Green New Deal for Public Housing, which would retrofit public housing units across the country. **Labor unions, including the American Federation of Teachers, support a \$500 billion investment in clean building upgrades**, as outlined in the THRIVE Act of 2021.

Political momentum is building behind the push for clean buildings: Rep. Jamaal Bowman has proposed a Green New Deal for Public Schools with more than \$446 billion in investments in healthy, climate-friendly retrofits and other upgrades to public schools across the country.



**\$446B**

NEEDED TO IMPROVE U.S. SCHOOLS' CLIMATE RESILIENCE, SAFETY AND HEALTH