

Honorable George Miller (D-CA)
Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee
Opening Statement at Full Committee Mark-Up of H.R. 3021
The 21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act
Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Good morning. Welcome to today's markup of H.R. 3021, the "21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act," legislation that would invest in modernizing public school buildings across the country.

This legislation is a strong example of how well-crafted public policy can address a number of key challenges at once. This bill has something in it for improving education, the economy, and the environment.

First, by improving school facilities, this legislation will help improve student achievement by providing more children and teachers with a modern, safe, clean and healthy place for learning.

Second, this legislation will give a boost to the economy by injecting demand into the faltering U.S. construction industry.

Third, this legislation will help make our schools part of the solution to the global warming crisis by encouraging more energy efficiency, as well as the use of renewable energy resources.

Any one of these three reasons would be enough to support this bill. But when you put all three of them together, this is a clear win for children, workers, and the planet.

For children and teachers, the unfortunate reality in too many communities in the U.S. is that schools are literally crumbling.

In 2000, the National Center for Education Statistics said it would take \$127 billion to bring schools into good condition, concluding that 75 percent of schools were in various stages of disrepair.

In 2001, the National Education Association said the U.S. would have to spend \$322 billion to bring all schools to the point where they are "safe, well-constructed" and have "up-to-date technologies."

In 2005, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave U.S. schools a 'D' on its national infrastructure report card. Most recently, in 2006, Building Educational Success Together said that previous studies "grossly underestimated" the need for school improvement and new construction, saying the need was greatest for schools serving low-income and minority students.

Substandard conditions in our schools make it harder for teachers to teach and children to learn. Research has found a relationship between facility quality and student achievement, independent of other factors.

For our economy, allowing much-needed school upgrades to go uncompleted represents a missed opportunity for creating jobs and stimulating growth. Last month, the construction industry lost 51,000 jobs – more than any other industry in the economy, and equal to roughly two-thirds of *all* of the jobs lost economy-wide.

Investing in school modernization will create jobs where they are desperately needed. Through jobs and supply purchases, such investment will inject spending into local economies, which is particularly important at a time when local governments – required by law to balance their budgets – are reducing spending.

For the environment, we must ask the government to take a leadership role in driving new innovations to fight global warming, including in our schools.

There is no longer any doubt that humans are contributing to global warming. We know that buildings are a major source of heat-trapping greenhouse gases, so we must reduce emissions caused by buildings by boosting energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy.

Green building can also improve children's academic achievement and health. A 2004 study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education found that poor environments in schools, primarily caused by indoor pollutants, [hurt](#) “the health, performance, and attendance of students.”

The American Lung Association has reported that asthma accounts for more than 14 million missed school days per year. Since one of the key factors in student learning is time spent in class, this is a problem both for children's health and their academic achievement.

Green schools typically use one-third less energy and one-third less water than conventional schools. Reduced energy use alone could save the average school \$100,000 each year, according to the U.S. Green Building Council.

The legislation before us today is simple. It authorizes \$6.4 billion for fiscal year 2009. It ensures that school districts around the country will quickly receive funds for school modernization, renovation, and repair projects. It also authorizes an additional \$100 million per year, for the next five years, for schools in the Gulf Region affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

H.R. 3021 allocates the same percentage of funds to states and school districts that they receive under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, except that it guarantees each district a minimum of \$5,000.

H.R. 3021 and the substitute amendment require that funds be used for projects that meet one of three widely recognized green building standards: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design; Energy Star; or Collaborative for High Performance Schools – or equivalent state or local standards. Already, at least 27 school districts in California have voluntarily adopted the CHPS standards.

The legislation allows a waiver from the green building requirements in cases where circumstances make them impracticable, but ensures that 90 percent of funds will be used for green projects by 2013.

We cannot provide every child with a world-class education unless we help states and school districts improve the condition of their school buildings and facilities. Yet since 2001 the federal government has provided almost no direct aid to help states and schools pay for school construction and repair.

We must invest in making every school a place that communities can be proud of and where children will be eager to learn.

I'd like to thank Congressman Chandler for introducing this legislation.

I'd like to thank Chairman Charlie Rangel, Congressman Bob Etheridge, and three members of this Committee, Congressman Loeb sack, Chairman Kildee, who will be introducing the substitute, and Congressman Holt, for their leadership on this very important issue.

And I'd like to thank Congresswoman Darlene Hooley, head of our Green Schools Caucus.

I urge my colleagues to support this common-sense, win-win legislation.

Thank you.

###