

Governor Gavin Newsom
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The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget
Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Chair, Assembly Budget
Subcommittee on Education
Finance, State Capitol, Room
2136, Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the State Assembly
State Capitol Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird
Chair, Senate Budget
Subcommittee 1 on Education
State Capitol, Room 5019
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Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond
President, State Board of Ed.
1430 N Street, Room 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Tony Thurmond
State Supt. of Public Instruction
1430 N Street, Suite 5602
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
President, Pro Tem of the
California Senate
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 9581

June 28, 2022

Dear California Budget Leaders,

On behalf of our organizations, we urge you to pursue the following actions to align California's school infrastructure investments with its essential climate and health goals:

- 1) Ensure that one-time General Fund dollars for school modernization and new construction in the 2022-23 budget are spent in alignment with California's climate and health goals, via trailer bill language or executive action.**
- 2) Include \$25 million in the 2022-23 budget for development of a master plan for healthy, equitable, and climate-resilient school buildings and grounds, and to boost technical assistance to districts and schools, via trailer bill language.**

We applaud the Governor, Senate, and Assembly leadership proposals to invest billions of dollars of one-time funding from the 2022-23 budget in K-12 school infrastructure. The quality of our school buildings and grounds matters deeply to the learning and development of our students and to the health of everyone who works and volunteers on our school campuses.

But years of disruption — by heat waves, wildfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic — have demonstrated that our schools are not equipped to respond to emerging environmental challenges.

Moreover, if we are serious about fulfilling California's keystone goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045, then our public school buildings and grounds must be at the forefront of that effort. Our 10,000 K-12 schools — more than 730 million square feet of buildings on nearly 125,000 acres of land — comprise one of California's largest sectors of public infrastructure. Given that some facilities investments have lifespans of more than 30 years, we must plan now to ensure that our current actions work towards, and not against, the state's 2045 goal.

Luckily, we have the technology we need to align California’s school infrastructure investment with our climate and health goals. Upgrading school HVAC systems with electrification and modern ventilation technologies can reduce indoor air pollution, keep California’s schools open, and ensure healthy learning environments for students — all while cutting costs.

With billions of dollars of one-time 2022-23 funding proposed for school infrastructure, it is imperative that leaders include clear standards and/or incentives for equity, emissions reduction, and climate-resiliency. California cannot afford to invest in new construction or major renovations that continue to rely on fossil fuels and create stranded assets down the line. Via trailer bill language or executive action, school infrastructure funding must be brought into alignment with California’s climate and emissions reduction goals. We must also invest in our school grounds to replace blacktop asphalt with trees and other nature-based solutions to protect children from extreme heat and other impacts of climate change.

Extraordinary times also call for extraordinary vision. The development of a master plan for healthy, equitable, and climate-resilient school buildings and grounds — along with aligned technical assistance to districts and schools — will ensure that future school infrastructure investment is cost-effective and aligned with California’s Climate Adaptation Strategy and Extreme Heat Action Plan. A master plan will also coordinate state, county, and district action to safeguard children’s health, inspire growth and learning, and secure a climate-resilient future for all Californians.

Detailed evidence and information about this proposal follows our signatures. Please direct questions and endorsements to Jonathan Klein at jonathan@undauntedk12.org.

With appreciation and determination,



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**SF Bay Physicians for Social
Responsibility**

Nathan Fairchild
Director of Science
**Shasta County Office of
Education**

Jody London
Former President (retired)
Oakland School Board

Alvin Lee
Executive Director
GENup (Generation Up)

*And numerous other leaders
from across the state signing as
individuals.*

Context and Support for Master Plan for Climate Resilient School Infrastructure

- ★ [California spends \\$15 billion every year](#) on building, maintaining, and operating its school facilities without aligning those investments with our goals for carbon neutrality and climate resilience.
- ★ California’s 5.9 million public school students and their parents know firsthand that many school buildings are not prepared for our changing climate. This is especially true for black and brown children who face [disproportionate climate change impacts](#), and are [more likely to attend school in buildings in poor condition](#). Furthermore, in school buildings with inadequate air conditioning and ventilation, high temperatures disrupt learning. [Hot school days disproportionately impact minority students, accounting for roughly 5 percent of the racial achievement gap](#).
- ★ On April 5, 2022, the California Legislative Analyst's Office issued [a report and call to action](#) that: "Climate change will increase the likelihood that schools and child care providers will need to respond to climate-driven emergencies and public health issues. This will require schools and providers to take steps to avoid disruptions in providing educational services when impacts occur and to modify their facilities."
- ★ A week later, the *Washington Post Magazine* published "[How Extreme Weather Has Created a Disaster for School Infrastructure](#)," reporting that "public school buildings in the U.S. are no match for apocalyptic weather — and little is being done to prepare... The lack of investment and planning around educational facilities has meant that extreme-weather events routinely shutter buildings and keep kids out of school, which disturbs their grades, mental health and stability of their communities."
- ★ Expressed in the form of a master plan, such as those we have laid out for [early learning and care](#), [higher education](#), [farm to school](#), and [environmental literacy](#), the vision for California’s public school infrastructure should align funding streams and technical support toward three goals:
 1. Reduce emissions from school buildings in alignment with California's goals of [reducing emissions by 40% by 2030](#) and [achieving carbon neutrality by 2045](#);
 2. Safeguard student health and protect the essential functions of public schools by reducing and mitigating climate-related disruptions and risk;
 3. Position public schools as hubs of resilience and resources for sustainable communities and prepare rising generations of Californians for careers in an increasingly green economy.

4. Increase equitable access to healthy, climate-resilient, decarbonized school buildings and grounds for those families most affected by and vulnerable to climate change impact
- ★ The master planning process should build on and sustain the efforts of the local education agencies participating in the [Getting to Zero Over Time](#) cohort convened by Division of State Architect and New Buildings Institute. This process should include district and county leaders, school boards, youth and environmental justice advocates, and state actors like the [Governor's Office of Planning and Research](#), [Strategic Growth Council](#), the [California Air Resources Board](#), the [California Natural Resources Agency](#), the [California School Finance Authority](#), the [California Department of Education](#), the [Division of the State Architect](#), and California's [investor-owned utilities](#).
 - ★ Currently, the Governor's and legislature's proposals for one-time General Fund dollars supporting school construction and maintenance projects in the 2022-23 budget, nor the \$12-\$15 billion statewide bond (AB75 and SB22) for modernization of education facilities being contemplated in the legislature, include any funding specifically targeted toward achieving climate resilience or moving schools toward zero emissions.
 - While California Green Building Standards Code (Title 24: Part 11) may eventually require that new school buildings be net zero, districts are not on a date-certain timeline to eliminate fossil fuel systems and equipment from schools nor to address climate resilience.
 - A master plan is an opportunity to align the actions of state and local leaders with our critical climate goals, and ensure we're not spending precious resources on fossil fuel infrastructure destined to become stranded assets.
 - ★ The legislature could allocate additional resources toward decarbonization and resilience via next-generation versions of programs such as:
 - The California Clean Energy Jobs Act (Proposition 39) that supported schools to plan and install energy efficiency upgrades and clean energy generation projects at school facilities;
 - The California Schools Healthy Air, Plumbing, and Efficiency Program (CalSHAPE) authorized by AB 841 to upgrade heating, air conditioning, and ventilation (HVAC) systems in public schools and replace non compliant plumbing fixtures and appliances that fail to meet water efficiency standards.