March 8, 2022

Senator Ron Wyden (Oregon)  
Chair, Committee on Finance  
United States Senate

Senator Mike Crapo (Idaho)  
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance  
United States Senate

AIHA Support for S.96 – Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

AIHA, the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS), commends the Senate for focusing on the critical need to improve school facilities throughout the nation.

According to the 2021 State of Our Schools Report, there is an $85 billion per year gap in unmet needs for school operation, maintenance, and improvement.¹ AIHA, as a member of the [Re]Build America’s School Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC),² which is comprised of more than 140 organizations, spanning the education, infrastructure, and OEHS industries, urges the Finance Committee and Senate to swiftly pass S.96, the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act and encourage your colleagues to enact the bill into law.

Of particular interest to AIHA, S.96 would focus on improvements to the indoor environmental quality of school facilities. Poor indoor air quality can irritate the eyes, nose, and throat, aggravate asthma, and lead to headaches, dizziness, fatigue, and nausea,³ which would detract from the learning experience.

Conversely, as the State of Our Schools Report noted, improvements to “Heating and cooling systems, air quality and filtration, acoustics and general maintenance all make a huge difference to student health and performance.”⁴

The Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act would authorize grants to be issued to States for school improvements. Grant priority will be given to “school facilities that pose a severe health and safety threat to students and staff”.

Importantly, the legislation would also require a report that includes an assessment of the effects of school facilities on student and staff health and safety. This report would be conducted at least every five years by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

² https://www.buildusschools.org/
³ https://www.aiha.org/public-resources/air-quality
Conclusion and next steps

AIHA urges you to help protect and improve the health of students, school staff and visitors by swiftly passing S.96, the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act and encouraging your colleagues to enact the bill into law.

AIHA thanks you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this legislation and looks forward to working with you on this and related matters. If you have any questions, please contact Mark Ames at mames@aiha.org or (703) 846-0730.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Lawrence Sloan, MBA, FASAE, CAE

AIHA

About AIHA

AIHA is the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety in the workplace and community. Founded in 1939, we support our members with our expertise, networks, comprehensive education programs, and other products and services that help them maintain the highest professional and competency standards. More than half of AIHA’s nearly 8,500 members are Certified Industrial Hygienists and many hold other professional designations. AIHA serves as a resource for those employed across the public and private sectors as well as to the communities in which they work. For more information, please visit www.aiha.org.

Cc:

Sen. Baldwin, Tammy (WI)
Sen. Blumenthal, Richard (CT)
Sen. Booker, Cory A. (NJ)
Sen. Brown, Sherrod (OH)
Sen. Cardin, Benjamin L. (MD)
Sen. Casey, Robert P., Jr. (PA)
Sen. Coons, Christopher A. (DE)
Sen. Cortez Masto, Catherine (NV)
Sen. Duckworth, Tammy (IL)
Sen. Durbin, Richard J. (IL)
Sen. Feinstein, Dianne (CA)
Sen. Gillibrand, Kirsten E. (NY)
Sen. Hassan, Margaret Wood (NH)
Sen. Heinrich, Martin (NM)
Sen. Hirono, Mazie K. (HI)
Sen. Kaine, Tim (VA)
Sen. Klobuchar, Amy (MN)
Sen. Leahy, Patrick J. (VT)
Sen. Lujan, Ben Ray (NM)
Sen. Markey, Edward J. (MA)
Sen. Merkley, Jeff (OR)
Sen. Murphy, Christopher (CT)
Sen. Ossoff, Jon (GA)
Sen. Padilla, Alex (CA)
Sen. Jack Reed (RI)
Sen. Rosen, Jacky (NV)
Sen. Sanders, Bernard (VT)
Sen. Shaheen, Jeanne (NH)
Sen. Smith, Tina (MN)
Sen. Stabenow, Debbie (MI)
Sen. Van Hollen, Chris (MD)
Sen. Warnock, Raphael G. (GA)
Sen. Warren, Elizabeth (MA)
Sen. Whitehouse, Sheldon (RI)