



Green New Deal for Public Schools Act

Bill Summary

All young people deserve an education that protects, nurtures, inspires, and empowers them to create a better world. Today, however, our public education system is under heightened attack from those seeking to further defund and privatize a public good that is central to a healthy democracy – one that has been under-resourced and unequally funded from the start. Meanwhile, our young people are experiencing a mental health crisis exacerbated by the pandemic; schools are facing critical educator and staff shortages; culture wars are coming after Black, brown, and LGBTQ+ identities in our schools and communities; and climate disasters and extreme heat are increasingly decimating school infrastructure and the health and safety of our learning environments.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman and Sen. Ed Markey's *Green New Deal for Public Schools Act* will invest **\$1.6 trillion over ten years** in America's K-12 education system, healing and strengthening our schools for the 21st century and addressing the holistic needs of students to support health, safety, and high quality learning opportunities. The bill puts young people and public education at the center of our national response to the crises of climate change, systemic racism, and economic inequality by:

- Creating an **Office of Sustainable Schools** within the U.S. Department of Education to administer new grant programs in collaboration with the Department of Energy
- Providing \$446 billion in Climate Capital Facilities Grants and \$40 billion for a Climate Change Resiliency Program to –
 - **Upgrade every public school building** in the country – starting with the highest-need districts – to create safe, healthy, zero-carbon, and accessible learning environments for students and staff
- Investing \$250 billion in Resource Block Grants for schools to –
 - **Drastically reduce student-to-staff ratios**, equipping schools to approach target ratios of 12:1 for grades K-8 and 15:1 for grades 9-12
 - **Strengthen and diversify** the educator pipeline
 - **Better integrate local knowledge & community relationships** in high-need schools
 - **Develop and implement initiatives** to support high quality teaching and learning, extracurricular and co-curricular activities, violence prevention, student mental health, and positive school climates.
- Creating an Educational Equity Planning Grants Pilot Program funded at \$100 million to –
 - **Address historic school funding inequities** within regions
- Increasing funding for Title I Part A and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) Part B by \$850 billion over ten years, including –

- **Quadrupling current funding for Title I Part A** to reach \$74 billion annually to support schools and districts with students living in poverty
- **Tripling current funding for IDEA Part B** to reach \$44 billion annually to support students with disabilities

According to researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and the climate + community project, the Green New Deal for Public Schools will fund 1.3 million jobs per year and eliminate 78 million metric tons of CO2 annually, equivalent to taking 17 million cars off the road. Climate Capital Facilities Grants will fully fund healthy green retrofits for the highest-need third of schools, as measured by the CDC Social Vulnerability Index, and offer a mix of grant funding and no- or low-interest loans for the middle and top thirds. Grants will cover two-thirds and one-third of retrofit costs for these schools, respectively.

Retrofitting our public schools will:

- Remove toxic materials such as mold and asbestos;
- Eliminate carbon emissions with a combination of energy efficiency upgrades and electrification, on-site renewable energy installation, and green power procurement; and
- Ensure full accessibility for students with disabilities.
- Additional funding will cover a broad spectrum of resiliency investments, from garden and tree planting to broadband infrastructure and EV charging stations. Each school will become a resiliency center for the surrounding community, and offer learning environments that serve as a living lab for the Green New Deal — directly engaging students in a range of sustainability topics, and kickstarting climate and other growth-sector STEAM careers across the country.

Resource Block Grants will fund staffing increases, expanded social service programming, school safety and positive school culture initiatives, and curriculum development at high-need schools. The program will allow Local Educational Agencies across the country to hire and train hundreds of thousands of additional educators and support staff, including paraprofessionals, school psychologists and counselors, and learning specialists. High-need LEAs may also use funds to design locally-rooted curricula; adopt trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and restorative justice practices, to move towards a “whole child” approach to public education; and partner with community organizations to offer a range of services to schools and surrounding neighborhoods, such as after-school programs.

Educational Equity Planning Grants will encourage neighboring LEAs to form regional consortia, which will receive funding to conduct extensive community outreach, identify the historical and current sources of educational disparities within the region, and create and implement a Regional Education Equity Plan to address those disparities.