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Lawmakers Press Trump to Spend on Public School Infrastructure

By [Andrew Ujifusa](#) on [January 18, 2018, 7:36 AM](#)

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A group of lawmakers has told President Donald Trump that new funding for improving school facilities is "essential for advancing student achievement" and should be a part of any broader infrastructure spending plan.

In a Wednesday letter to Trump, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., along with 23 other senators—all Democrats—highlighted [a 2014 federal study that said it would take \\$197 billion](#) to pay for repairs, modernizations, and renovations needed by U.S. schools, or about \$4.5 million per school (53 percent of schools reported in the study's survey that such actions were necessary). They also cite a separate 2016 report which reported that [the nation underfunds school construction by \\$38 billion every year](#).

In November, [Education Week released a comprehensive report on how school leaders are rethinking school design and facilities](#).

"Too many of the over 50 million students and six million staff who learn and work in our public schools spend their days in facilities that fail to make the grade," Murkowski and Reed, the lead authors of the letter, wrote to Trump. They continued:

To address this crisis, the federal government should consider partnering with states on innovative financing mechanisms to help every community ensure their schools are safe, healthy, and modern, particularly in low-income and rural school districts where the need is often most profound. This is the right thing to do for students, educators, and communities. It is also a smart investment, since it will give a needed boost to our economy by creating local jobs in every community across the country.

Reed previously introduced the School Building Improvement Act, which would provide \$100 billion in federal grants and construction bonds to schools over a decade. The letter also states that spending \$100 billion on infrastructure would generate an estimated 1.8 million jobs. Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., the top Democrat on the House education committee, [has introduced similar legislation](#).

Scott and over 150 House Democratic lawmakers [sent their own letter to Trump on Wednesday making a similar pitch](#).

However, a Georgetown University study was [skeptical that a big boost in spending on infrastructure in general](#) would create a large number of jobs over the long term.

The lawmakers who signed on to Wednesday's letter also say they would work with Trump to ensure school infrastructure spending is a part of any Trump administration infrastructure spending plan, something president has discussed since taking office but not finalized.

Photo: Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, shakes hands with President Donald Trump, as she speaks during a passage of the tax overhaul bill event on the South Lawn at the White House in Washington, D.C., in December. (Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP)

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