

CLEAN AND HEALTHY BUILDINGS

The Problem

Too many of our homes, offices, and other buildings are old, inefficient, polluting, costly, vulnerable, and unhealthy. Overcrowded and substandard housing is currently making it harder for millions of people to shelter at home to prevent COVID-19 infection. Meanwhile, residential and commercial buildings account for nearly 40 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, due to the burning of oil and gas for heat in some buildings and the inefficient use of energy in most buildings for heating, cooling, lighting, and appliances. Such inefficiency also spells high energy bills; about one-third of all U.S. households have trouble paying those bills. The burden falls heaviest on low-income families, which tend to spend significantly higher shares of their income on electricity — twice as much as the median household. In addition, many old buildings also contain indoor air pollutants such as mold that can trigger asthma attacks. Compounding these threats to human health and safety is the fact that many buildings are not equipped to handle climate-related disasters such as increased flooding, extreme heat, or violent storms.

The Solution

We urgently need to upgrade our buildings to support public health, reduced emissions, economic security, and climate resilience. That means fully electrifying our homes, schools, hospitals, offices, and other buildings so that they do not need to rely on polluting fossil fuels for heat. It means weatherizing and retrofitting buildings to increase energy efficiency, slash electricity bills, and reduce climate pollution. It means upgrading buildings to withstand climate change and support healthy living and working environments.

The Jobs

Investments in clean and healthy buildings would provide good jobs for hundreds of thousands of workers. Specifically, Congress should:

- **Provide over 230,000 jobs to upgrade all public housing:** Congress needs to pass the Green New Deal for Public Housing Act, investing \$172 billion



over 10 years to retrofit all U.S. public housing in support of energy efficiency, electrification, rooftop solar, climate resilience, and a healthier living environment. In addition to creating hundreds of thousands of jobs, this investment would improve living conditions for over 2 million people, and cut over 5 million tons of carbon emissions each year.

- **Provide over 165,000 jobs to upgrade all schools, hospitals, and municipal buildings:** Congress needs to invest \$61.2 billion over five years to retrofit every school, university, hospital, and municipal building in the country. These building upgrades would create good jobs; improve health standards for hospital patients, health workers, students, and teachers; cut energy costs; reduce pollution; and help tackle climate change.
- **Provide over 92,000 jobs to support community-led development:** Congress needs to invest \$30 billion for Community Development Block Grants over five years to expand affordable housing, improve living conditions and public health, and support community-led economic development in low-income neighborhoods.

And More ...

For a complete list of clean building investments, see economic analysis from the Political Economy Research Institute and Sierra Club's letter to Congress, which outlines specific priorities for a bold stimulus package that puts millions of people back to work to build a healthier, more equitable clean energy economy.