

# **BUILDING OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE**

## **Preamble**

Building Our Children's Future is a coalition comprised of taxpayers, parents, education leaders, community advocates, municipalities, construction professionals, business and civic organizations committed to ensuring that the state fulfills the New Jersey Supreme Court mandate to guarantee educationally adequate school facilities to all children and that proper attention is focused on the renewal of funding for New Jersey's school construction program.

New Jersey citizens have consistently supported high quality public education for all children. They understand the investment in our public schools is essential to the civic and economic vitality of our State, now and in the future. School facilities are an integral part of that vitality.

The State Legislature recognizes the connection between adequate school facilities and an adequate education. As stated in the language creating the schools construction initiative, the Legislature is bound to provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools. Such responsibility includes ensuring that students are educated in physical facilities that are safe, healthy, and conducive to learning. The Legislature's constitutional responsibility for adequate educational facilities should be met to assure that the core curriculum content standards are taught to all the children of the State of New Jersey regardless of where they happen to live. Inadequacies in the quality, utility, and safety of educational facilities must be remedied by the State. Lawmakers also deemed it essential for buildings to be designed with maximum operating efficiencies and new technologies to advance the energy efficiency of the buildings.

In 2000, New Jersey launched the initial phase of an historic initiative to actualize those values, and to fund a statewide school construction program, to guarantee all children the opportunity to attend school in a safe and educationally adequate building.

Since its inception, New Jersey's school construction program has delivered numerous new and renovated schools throughout the state, improving children's education and the quality of life in their communities, while providing much needed property tax relief to local homeowners, renters and businesses.

This initiative has been a major engine for the state's economy since its inception and will continue to significantly contribute to the growth of New Jersey jobs and economy, particularly in the construction and small business sectors.

The significant job growth created gives workers opportunities to train in a skilled trade and apply that trade to future development. The boon the school construction program has given to New Jersey's economy benefits New Jersey workers and businesses.

Although initial funding for the school construction program is almost exhausted, there remains a substantial need for new and renovated schools statewide. Building Our Children's Future believes that a fully funded school construction program is critically important to the state's future.

## Principles

Building our Children's Future is committed to making sure key decision makers are informed and focused on fulfilling the State Supreme Court mandate by continuing to fund the building of safe and educationally adequate schools in a cost effective and efficient manner. To that end, we invite all who concur with these principles to join us in this effort. We believe that:

1. The State must continue to provide financing for needed school construction throughout the state, including Abbott and non-Abbott districts as reflected in their long-range facilities plans.
2. The school construction program should strengthen district involvement in the planning, design and building process so that schools are educationally adequate and of high quality to ensure their use for years to come.
3. The school construction program should strengthen community engagement in the planning and design process to integrate schools into the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located and to enhance the educational programs, the local economy, and the quality of life for community residents.
4. The school construction program should continue and strengthen opportunities for training, employment, and contracting for individuals and small businesses in New Jersey.
5. The school construction program should continue and strengthen the participation of minority- and women-owned businesses and minority and women workers.

We will continue to expand Building Our Children's Future to include as many constituencies as possible that support these principles.