

REVITALIZING AMERICA'S SCHOOLYARDS ACT (S. 4258/H.R. 8303)

Background

Across the United States, millions of students attend schools with aging asphalt playgrounds and limited access to green space. Many schoolyards contribute to extreme heat, stormwater runoff, poor air quality, and limited opportunities for outdoor learning and recreation. Schools in underserved communities are disproportionately affected, often lacking safe, healthy, and resilient outdoor environments.

Research continues to demonstrate that access to nature-rich schoolyards improves student physical and mental health, supports academic achievement, strengthens environmental literacy, and provides opportunities for outdoor education. Green schoolyards also deliver community-wide benefits by reducing urban heat, improving stormwater management, expanding tree canopy, enhancing biodiversity, and creating spaces that can be used beyond the school day.

Landscape architects play a critical role in planning and designing these outdoor learning environments by integrating nature-based solutions, resilient infrastructure, recreation, accessibility, and educational opportunities into school grounds that serve students, educators, and surrounding communities.

Solution

Federal investments are needed to help public schools transform aging schoolyards into healthier, safer, and more resilient outdoor learning environments. Green schoolyards not only improve opportunities for outdoor learning and recreation, but also help communities reduce urban heat, better manage stormwater, expand tree canopy, improve biodiversity, and strengthen resilience to increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

To help schools realize these benefits, Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) introduced S. 4258, the Revitalizing America's Schoolyards Act, and Representative Summer Lee (D-PA) introduced companion legislation, H.R. 8303. The legislation establishes a competitive grant program within the U.S. Department of Education to support the planning, design, and construction of green schoolyards. It encourages projects that incorporate nature-based infrastructure—including trees, native vegetation, rain gardens, outdoor classrooms, school gardens, and natural play spaces—while prioritizing schools serving economically disadvantaged communities. The legislation also directs the Department of Education to develop national best practices and technical assistance to help schools plan, design, construct, and maintain high-quality outdoor learning environments.

Request

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) urges Congress to support healthier, safer, and more resilient school environments for students nationwide. We ask that you cosponsor the Revitalizing America's Schoolyards Act (S. 4258/H.R. 8303) and support federal investments that expand access to nature-based schoolyards and outdoor learning environments. Landscape architects are essential partners in planning and designing resilient schoolyards that improve student health, strengthen communities, and deliver long-term environmental, educational, and economic benefits.

For additional information or to cosponsor the Revitalizing America's Schoolyards Act, please contact Elizabeth Hill at elizabeth_hill@heinrich.senate.gov in the office of Senator Martin Heinrich, or Lorraine Blatt at lorraine.blatt@mail.house.gov in the office of Representative Summer Lee.