

Massachusetts announces \$100 Million for air quality improvements in public schools

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the availability of \$100 million in grant funding for school districts to improve ventilation and indoor air-quality to support healthy learning environments. The grants will be targeted to schools with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, English language learners and communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funding is available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) bill and authorized by Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021. As required by the ARPA bill, funds will be distributed by a formula to ensure the highest need districts receive the largest portion of funding. More than 20 school districts are eligible for up to \$1 million, and several districts qualify for several million dollars, with Boston Public Schools eligible to receive up to \$15 million and Worcester Public Schools eligible for up to \$7 million.

School districts are strongly encouraged to focus on efficient, environmentally friendly HVAC and air quality technologies when planning upgrades, consistent with Governor Charlie Baker's 2050 net zero pledge.

"This grant funding will address the needs of school facilities and will support important repairs to improve ventilation and indoor air quality, particularly in schools and communities significantly impacted by COVID-19," said Governor Charlie Baker. "Additionally, this funding offers an

opportunity for schools to align their buildings with the Commonwealth's net-zero goal and to make more environmentally-conscious infrastructure upgrades."

"With these grants, we can direct more resources to school districts with economically disadvantaged student populations that have a greater number of buildings with HVAC systems in need of moderate repairs, major repairs or complete replacement," said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. "These grants will allow us to improve air quality for tens of thousands of students and educators in hundreds of school buildings across the Commonwealth."

"Since the start of the pandemic, the legislature has focused on working towards an equitable and evidence-based recovery that helps deal with the present impacts of COVID-19, while also preparing for the future," said Senate President Karen E. Spilka. "By providing funding for HVACs through 2027, our hope is to support public health and education initiatives by giving schools the state-of-the-art air filtration systems they need and deserve."

"Ensuring that all public schools in the Commonwealth are equipped with quality ventilation systems, especially schools in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, is critical for supporting student well-being and success" said House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano. "I'm proud of the work that was done in the House to initiate this funding to improve air-quality in our school buildings and provide healthy learning environments for students, educators and staff. I want to thank my colleagues in the legislature for prioritizing these vital investments."

School districts can apply for the grants to make HVAC systems and indoor air quality improvements, which could include:

- Needs assessments of existing school environments, HVAC systems, and indoor air quality to establish a baseline of a

school's existing conditions

- Feasibility studies to develop long-term indoor air quality plans that improve fresh air exchange rates and reduce or eliminate reliance on fossil fuels
- Design, bidding assistance and construction phase services for projects to upgrade or replace existing HVAC systems
- Implementation of indoor air quality improvement plans, securing outsourced services, establishing in-house HVAC maintenance positions, and securing equipment to maintain, repair or install new HVAC systems
- Implementation of indoor air quality improvement plans, securing services and materials to ensure operability of windows and doors

"We are very pleased to be able to provide this funding to school districts to improve HVAC systems and air quality in classrooms for students and staff. This grant program will give schools the flexibility to make improvements that best suit their needs. For example, upgrades and replacement of windows and doors is allowable if they are inoperable and prevent fresh air from flowing into the building," said Education Secretary James Peyser.

"These investments will benefit students, educators, and everyone in the community who uses school buildings," said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley. "I hope districts will seize this opportunity to improve the health and comfort of their schools where needed."

Eligible schools can find out more information here: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2023/209/>.