

July 6, 2021

Dear Members of Congress,

As leading organizations in the design and construction industry, we are writing to urge Congress to include investments in resilient buildings in the upcoming infrastructure legislation. We have joined together through a coalition to advocate that buildings be a critical element of any measure moving through Congress.

Our nation's building stock is being called upon to perform better than ever before. The pandemic has highlighted the built environment's impact on health, well-being, and economic security. With those lessons still unfolding, we must also address the ever-increasing hazards that threaten our buildings—and more importantly, threaten the occupants inside.

Severe weather events are becoming more frequent and devastating. Between 2014 and 2019, the United States experienced 77 weather and climate-related disasters where the overall damage was at least \$1 billion. This resulted in total costs of over \$550 billion and nearly 4,000 lives lost.<sup>i</sup> There are currently millions of buildings at high risk for flood, wind, fire, subsidence, sea level rise, and earthquakes that must be adapted to achieve resilience for the future. Man-made hazards are also increasing. Every region of the country has its own distinct challenges, but disaster can strike in any community. Investing in the spaces where Americans live, work, learn, and gather is urgent.

Disaster mitigation is effective and saves taxpayer dollars. A recent study from the National Institute of Building Sciences shows that federal mitigation grants save \$6 for every \$1 spent and private sector building retrofits save \$4 for every \$1 spent.<sup>ii</sup> Our industries can attest that building sciences, design approaches, and technology continue to advance to make buildings more resilient.

The infrastructure legislation should include grants to enable seismic retrofits, wildfire mitigation, federal flood mapping and other pre-disaster mitigation projects in our nation's critical buildings. Now is the time to invest in our nation's schools, hospitals, civic centers, transit facilities, and affordable housing. Our industries can make these vital resilience improvements, but we need Congress's help to bring them to scale. A comprehensive physical infrastructure package is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fortify our communities with the contemporary planning, building materials, design, construction, and operational techniques that will improve resilience to all-hazards.

Finally, as Congress continues to debate what should be included in infrastructure spending, most Americans want buildings included. A poll commissioned by the American Institute of Architects found that more than 80 percent of Americans see public buildings as part of the nation's infrastructure.<sup>iii</sup> Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) all include buildings within their definitions of critical infrastructure.

Americans spend over 90% of their time indoors. We must invest in our nation's building infrastructure to protect building occupants from the hazards we can expect in the decades to come.

Sincerely,

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EVP/ Chief Executive Officer  
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**Robert D. Thomas**

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**Monika Schulz**

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National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)

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Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

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<sup>i</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Environmental Information, "Billion Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters, Summary Stats," <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/summary-stats/US/2016-2020>

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<sup>ii</sup> National Institute of Building Sciences, “Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2019 Report,”

[http://2021.nibs.org/files/pdfs/NIBS\\_MMC\\_MitigationSaves\\_2019.pdf](http://2021.nibs.org/files/pdfs/NIBS_MMC_MitigationSaves_2019.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> American Institute of Architects, “AIA Build America Summit: Public Opinion Poll Results,”

[https://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-](https://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/Build%20America%20Summit%20Public%20Opinion%20Poll%20Results.pdf)

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