

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 18, 2012

Acting Administrator Daniel M. Tangherlini
U.S. General Services Administration
GSA Office of the Administrator
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Administrator Tangherlini:

We are writing today to express our concern with the recently released LEED 2012 standards set forth by the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) and subsequent adoption of these standards by The General Services Administration (GSA). Previously, GSA has adopted the LEED program to help the federal government achieve energy efficiency requirements for buildings, as mandated by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. However, we are deeply concerned about proposed changes to the LEED program that create the potential for significant job losses and increased building costs at a time when our economy can least afford it.

The proposed LEED 2012 rating system is a significant departure from the previous version and will eliminate the use of dozens of materials and hundreds of proven building products, all while driving up building costs to the taxpayer and threatening employment in our districts. USGBC is planning to create two "Materials and Resources" credits under LEED 2012: one for material ingredient reporting" and one for "avoidance of chemicals of concern." The credits would affect hundreds of substances—many of which are key to helping building materials achieve their desired properties, including energy efficiency.

We are deeply concerned that the LEED rating system is becoming a tool to punish chemical companies and plastics makers and spread misinformation about materials that have been at the forefront of improving environmental performance—and even occupant safety—and in buildings. This transformation into an anti-chemical system runs counter to the government's objectives of increasing energy efficiency and utilizes a European standard called REACH. US manufacturers have no ability to participate in the development. LEED 2012 not only threatens jobs, it will almost certainly cost taxpayers money. The arbitrary chemical restrictions in the two proposed credits could affect many energy-efficient construction products, such as insulation, roofing, wiring and energy-efficient windows, putting a further strain on already tight federal budgets.

Most likely affected by the new standards are vinyl-based building and construction products. These products include vinyl flooring, roofing, wire, and other critical materials. These products are universally considered the most durable, sustainable, and energy efficient by the construction industry. Whether intended or unintended, the effects of these new provisions would not only severely harm manufacturing in this country, but would also be counter-productive in the mission to develop more sustainable and energy efficient building codes. Moreover, USGBC has not analyzed whether alternative materials would be able to perform at the same level, nor has it provided any evidence that avoiding existing materials will result in improved energy efficiency.

If USGBC does not reconsider these harmful provisions in LEED 2012, we respectfully request that GSA stop using the LEED rating system. GSA's adoption of LEED 2012, in fact, would amount to the federal government sanctioning an unscientific, arbitrary, and discriminatory program of materials selection. We understand GSA's interest in sustainability and energy efficiency throughout the federal building landscape. However, the federal government should not base these decisions solely on a program whose reach has grown to be counterintuitive to this mission, and will cost numerous American jobs, while wasting taxpayer dollars.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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Joe Banta

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John Bann

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