

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Fairfax County School Board
Draft Joint Legislative Position on State K-12 Funding for the 2018 General Assembly

Public education funding in the Commonwealth is enshrined in the Virginia Constitution as a joint responsibility of both state and local governments, so it is essential that the state fully meet its Constitutional responsibility to adequately fund K-12 education. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth continues to allow critical gaps to persist between state funding and the actual costs of providing a high-quality education, placing more of the fiscal burden on localities while substantially limiting local revenue sources, creating a discrepancy that has become increasingly untenable.

Though there have been some recent helpful infusions of state funding, the current funding formulas do not adequately address the challenges facing high cost of living localities like Fairfax County. Those challenges are exacerbated by structural features in the formulas that leave statewide funding far behind the inflation-adjusted FY 2009 level. As the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) noted in its recent review of K-12 spending, localities provided a majority of total funding for school divisions in FY 2014, contributing an additional \$3.6 billion beyond the minimum funding required. JLARC also noted that in FY 2013, Virginia ranked 23rd nationwide in total per-student spending, but 11th in the local share of this spending, reflecting Virginia's reliance on local effort and a growing imbalance in this partnership.

Virginia businesses emphatically assert that strong public schools and an educated workforce are essential elements in their decision to locate and remain in Virginia. Investments in early childhood and K-12 education provide a foundation for learning and achievement, often reducing or eliminating the need for more costly interventions and spurring economic development. Failure to adequately meet the needs of the youngest Virginians can create repercussions for individual families, the larger community, and the Commonwealth. Moving Virginia's economy forward requires substantially increasing state investments in K-12 education.

The Boards strongly support:

- Fully funding the biennial re-benchmark of Direct Aid to Public Education;
- Realistic and appropriately funded Standards of Quality staffing standards consistent with local best practices;
- Elimination of the support positions ratio cap, which has artificially lowered the state's funding contributions for critical educational support positions by hundreds of millions of dollars since its adoption in 2009 (*proposed addition*);
- Use of true weighted averages (which account for actual numbers of students/personnel) when calculating average teacher salaries and other education costs, instead of linear weighted estimators which significantly understate the true local costs of teacher salaries and other costs throughout the Commonwealth (*proposed addition*);
- Restoration of full funding for a Cost of Competing Adjustment (COCA) for support personnel, a factor used in the state K-12 funding formula recognizing the competitive salaries required in high cost of living regions to attract and retain high-quality personnel;
- Recognition of cost of living variations throughout the Commonwealth in state funding formulas, in order to more accurately determine a locality's true ability to pay;
- Appropriate and adequate recognition in funding formulas of the increased costs required to serve children with greater service needs, including students receiving special education and mental health services (costs are approximately 100 percent more than general education),

English language learners (costs are approximately 30 percent more than general education), and those living in economically disadvantaged households (costs are approximately 10 percent more than general education); and,

- Increased state resources for early childhood education programs which help young children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.

The Boards strongly oppose:

- State budget cuts that disproportionately target or affect Northern Virginia;
- State policies which divert K-12 education funding away from local public schools and toward non-public options (*proposed addition*); and,
- Structural cuts or formula/policy changes which impose unfunded mandates on localities, further weakening the partnership between the state and localities.

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