

K-12 FUNDING - Public education funding in the Commonwealth is enshrined in the Virginia Constitution as a joint responsibility of both state and local governments. To meet that responsibility, it is essential that the state meet its Constitutional responsibility to adequately fund K-12 education. Unfortunately, to the detriment of children and localities, the Commonwealth continues to underfund its K12 obligations, cost-shifting the responsibility to local governments and presenting a real challenge to providing a high-quality public education. This local tax burden to cover the state's underfunding is keenly felt in high cost-of-living jurisdictions like Albemarle County.

The watershed 2023 [Virginia's K-12 Teacher Pipeline](#) report outlined both the overall inadequacy of state funding and the substantial flaws in current state funding formulas. Virginia's Joint Legislative and Audit Review Commission's (JLARC) findings are dramatic:

- **Virginia K12 Contributions Are in Bottom Half Nationally.** Virginia school divisions receive less K-12 funding per student than the 50-state average as well as the regional average, which equates to \$1,900 per student in Virginia's underfunding of its students. For ACPS's 13,459 students that amounts to \$25,572,100 of unrealized support or almost 10% of the ACPS operating budget. At a school level, that translates into \$1,000,000 per ACPS's 25 schools, which might help in our efforts to close the achievement gap.
- **SOQ Formula Need to be Updated.** The state Standards of Quality (SOQ) formula yields substantially less state funding than actual division spending and benchmarks. The current SOQs are so minimal, all 130 school divisions exceed most standards so even as a floor to staffing standards, they dramatically underestimate the actual costs of public education. Overall, the SOQ formula provided \$6.6 billion less than what was spent by local school divisions in FY 2021.
- **School Nurses.** Not only does the SOQ formula need to be adjusted for existing positions but other positions, such as school nurses, should be added to the list.
- **Great Recession Cost Saving Measures Are Still In Place.** Not only does the SOQ formula systematically underestimate school division costs, but it continues to employ several Great Recession-era cost reduction measures to further reduce the state K12 contribution (including 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 annually since its adoption in 2009).
- **No Adjustment for Local Labor Costs.** The SOQ formula does not adequately account for local labor costs. As a result, the formula includes additional factors, like the Cost of Competing Adjustment (COCA), as an acknowledgement of the formula's failure to account for cost of living. However, such factors are too small to appropriately counteract the inadequacy of the funding formula and schools in high cost-of-living regions have difficulty attracting and retaining high-quality personnel. The School Board supports the following JLARC recommendations for addressing these deficiencies and underfunding:
 - **Adjustments for High Needs Students.** Increasing state funding support for school divisions with high numbers or concentrations of English learners (approximately 30 percent higher costs than general education), students living in economically disadvantaged households (approximately 10 percent higher costs than general education), and students receiving special education and mental health services (approximately 100 percent higher costs than general education).
 - **Early Childhood Education.** Increasing state resources for early childhood education programs, which help young children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.

The Board **opposes** changes that divert K12 funding away from local public schools and toward non-public options.

TEACHER PIPELINE - We are grateful to General Assembly for requesting JLARC's research and its report, [Virginia's K-12 Teacher Pipeline](#). Although ACPS has been able to fill most of its teaching positions, it has become more difficult as the numbers of those entering education has decreased. ACPS is finding some of the challenges of teacher and employee recruitment that mirror those of other Commonwealth localities and in the nation. We **support** JLARC's recommendations and, more specifically, believe some would directly and immediately benefit our school division as emphasized below.

- **Changes in Teacher Licensure.** We **support** [Recommendation 2](#) of the 2023 JLARC study that states: General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Board of Education to either (i) replace the Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment with a nationally recognized teacher licensure test that is more relevant for assessing prospective teachers or (ii) eliminate the Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment as a requirement for a full 10-year renewable Virginia teaching license.
- **Waivers.** We **support** [Recommendation 3](#) of the 2023 JLARC study that states: The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Code of Virginia to create a waiver through which the Board of Education shall issue a full 10-year renewable Virginia teaching license to qualified individuals attending approved higher education teacher preparation programs who have not passed the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment but meet established criteria.
- **Teaching Scholarships.** We **support** [Recommendation 5](#) of the 2023 JLARC study on Virginia's K-12 Teacher Pipeline that states: The General Assembly may wish to consider including language and funding in the Appropriation Act to increase the annual funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.
- **Monitoring of Reciprocity.** We **support** [Recommendation 7](#) of the 2023 JLARC study that states: The Virginia Department of Education should list and periodically update on its website the specific teacher license types and endorsement areas in other states that qualify for a Virginia teaching license through reciprocity, prioritizing states from which Virginia receives the most reciprocity applications.

SCHOOL DIVISION AND LOCAL AUTHORITY - We also support the following measures:

- **Easement Preapproval.** ACPS **requests** the Virginia General Assembly revise the VA Code to allow the preapproval of easements related to school board-approved capital projects. This would be comparable to the right that Albemarle County local government has established through a resolution (in which they cite state code [15.2-1800-B](#)). This ability would render completion of our capital projects more efficient and, as a consequence, an improved ability to serve our students and local public education.
- **Additional State Support and Funding Options.** One of the consequences of the General Assembly underfunding K12 education is that local governments have had to step up. This state-to-local government cost shifting has the secondary impact of having local governments being unable to adequately fund much needed capital projects. To remedy this, we **support** both the addition of state resources to school capital funds and the expansion of funding options for localities for capital and school construction costs. This would include expanding the dedicated local sales and use tax authority first given to select counties in 2019.