



April 1, 2022

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Glenn Youngkin, Speaker Todd Gilbert, Majority Leader Dick Saslaw, Chairman Barry Knight, and Chairwoman Janet Howell,

We thank you for your ongoing work on the state budget. As school boards and local boards of supervisors and city councils prepare their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year, the lack of clarity about whether the state will be providing critical additional funds for public schools is hampering their ability to develop efficient school budgets and teacher contracts.

To make sure that Virginia is a place where every child has the freedom to learn, grow and thrive, we call on you to pass and sign a budget that includes the following critical investments. These investments will make progress toward implementing the Board of Education's prescribed Standards of Quality, are grounded in evidence-based approaches that improve student outcomes, and are informed by stakeholders who work, learn, and collaborate in schools:

School staff:

- *Reading specialists (\$63 million)* as included by both the House and Senate. This would increase the number of reading specialists to one for every 550 students in grades K-3.
- *Principals and assistant principals (\$104 million)* as included by the House. This would provide a principal in every school, including small elementary schools, and increase assistant principal positions.
- *Instructors for English learners (\$22 million)* as included by the Senate. This would increase the number of instructors for English learners to 22 per 1,000 students. English learners faced among the most barriers to learning during the pandemic and lost the most ground on state tests of any student subgroup measured.
- *At-risk add-on (\$269 million)* as included by the Senate. This would increase support for schools serving many students from families with low incomes, and would particularly help rural divisions.
- *Support cap (\$272 million)* as included by the Senate. This would partially lift the "support cap," which for more than a decade has limited state funding for all types of essential support staff positions in schools.

Teacher and staff pay:

- *State share of 5% raises each year (\$751 million)* as included by the Senate for SOQ-funded positions to address turnover and recruitment.
- *Bonuses in caboose bill (\$137 million ARPA funds)* as included by the Senate to help with teacher retention.
- *Teacher recruitment incentives (\$15 million ARPA funds)* as included by the Senate. This would provide teacher recruitment incentive payments and help fill unfilled instructional positions for 2022-2023.

School construction and renovation:

- *Allow the Literary Fund to be dedicated to school construction (\$166 million general fund, freeing up to \$400 million in Literary Fund money)* as included by the Senate. Providing \$166 million in general fund dollars for teacher retirement, when combined with other Literary Fund resources, allows up to \$400 million in Literary Fund dollars to go to school construction loans or interest rate subsidies over the next two years.
- *Additional General Fund resources for school construction (\$500 million)* as included by the Senate. Together with the use of the general fund for teacher retirement to free up Literary Fund dollars, this would provide \$666 million of general fund resources, and \$800 to \$900 million in total resources, toward school construction grants and/or loans and interest rate subsidies.
- *Fair distribution of school construction and renovation funds* as proposed by the House. This should include taking into account poverty levels at the school and locality level in addition to school infrastructure needs.

Preserving resources for public schools:

- *Provide an ongoing, non-eroding backfill for any reduction in state or local grocery tax revenue for schools.* To the extent that changes to the grocery tax impact state or local funds for K-12 schools, the state should provide replacement revenue that will ensure each school division and local government is held harmless not only these coming two years, but in the future as well.
- *Consider student outcomes when considering tax changes.* If you feel committed to supporting a tax cut for some Virginia families this session, we encourage you to expand the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), as proposed by the Senate. Longitudinal research clearly shows a strong correlation between receiving an EITC and improvements to student health and education outcomes. Low-income families receiving the credit also would be more likely to spend it on needed household expenditures, thus providing a larger economic benefit than tax cuts targeted towards higher income Virginia families who would be more likely to save the money.

Prioritizing parents means making sure their children have access to a high-quality public education. Therefore, we ask that you fund our schools and make sure our students have the support they need to thrive.

Thank you.

Legal Aid Justice Center



The Commonwealth Institute



Virginia Education Association



New Virginia Majority



Virginia Educators United



Virginia Excels



Edu-Futuro



American Federation of Teachers Virginia



Richmond Region League of United Latin American Citizens



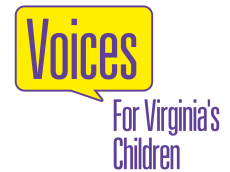
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