

2024 Legislative Advocacy Update

General Assembly Update for the Richmond City School Board

Presented By: Matthew Stanley, Director, Advocacy & Outreach

Venue: Richmond City School Board Meeting

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Early Session Headlines

Of the \$15+ billion in amendments introduced by legislators in the public education section of the budget, Richmond legislators introduced over \$3 billion in amendments addressing RPS priorities.

The recent Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) reports on [Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula](#) and [Virginia K-12 Teacher Pipeline](#) have spurred legislation and budget amendments incorporating many of their recommendations. The House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over education policy have begun vetting the bills before referring anything with a fiscal impact to the House Appropriations Committee or Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee. These two budget committees will likely hold them in the committee as they prepare their respective budget proposals.

We are grateful to the Richmond legislative delegation and many others for their support of public education funding reform.

There is support to implement a student-based funding formula has support but a legislative commission has been proposed to further determine a plan forward for the 2025 session.

While many of the JLARC recommendations have been introduced this year, the legislature is also considering [next steps](#) on JLARC's longer-term recommendations, including the [transition to a student-based funding model instead of a staffing-based funding model](#).

RPS 2024 Legislative Advocacy Priorities

Learn more about our advocacy priorities!


For more information on RPS legislative advocacy priorities, download our advocacy priorities handout or [last month's School Board presentation](#). The following slides will contain specific bills and budget amendments to support.

Email Updates

[Sign up](#) for weekly email updates about legislative action and opportunities to advocate!

Form Letters

Find sample letters to edit and email to legislators [here!](#)




2024 Legislative Advocacy Priorities

ACT NOW TO ADVOCATE FOR RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

The best way to show love for our kids is by advocating for RPS to get the support and funds it needs to provide an amazing education.

Your voice is critical during the General Assembly session in January and February. Phone, email, and legislative visits are all great and accessible ways to get involved. RPS has six legislative priorities, and your perspective will help our lawmakers understand why kids need them. For more information and resources to support advocacy, visit the RPS website at rvaschools.net/advocacy.

 Find your legislators and their contact information on the Virginia General Assembly website at virginialegislature.gov.


Priority 1 — Reform the Local Composite Index

Richmond faces budget challenges despite the city becoming richer. The latest state analysis suggests Richmond should pay for 57.4% of school costs, **leading to less money from the state**. A recent report suggests a fairer way to calculate education costs, using a three-year average, **which could mean more money for Richmond schools**. Families supporting this change could mean more funding for Richmond schools and ensure kids have what they need to learn.


LOCAL COMPOSITE INDEX (LCI)

The state's formula for calculating **how much money Richmond should pay** for Richmond Public Schools.


Priority 2 — Reform the At-Risk Add On

 Recent findings shed light on a concerning funding gap for RPS's economically disadvantaged students, and the existing funding program falls short of addressing their educational needs. Families should support adopting the federally approved **Identified Student Percentage** measure for precise calculations, which includes consolidating existing programs into a **new At-Risk Program under the Standards of Quality**, which could yield a substantial **\$250 million infusion** in additional aid.

Priority 3 — Strategically Support Extending Stimulus-Funded Investments



Federal COVID funds have helped schools hire **mental health staff**, but this support is ending. Schools may have to cut these positions when we know our students need more mental health support now. Additionally, the General Assembly should provide funds for a **grant program to aid schools facing high community violence**.



Additional instructional time is a proven strategy for recovering from learning loss. Based on the preliminary success of the RPS200 program, the General Assembly should **expand the extended-year grant program**, which provides funding to support schools interested in adopting a **200-day calendar**.

Priority 4 — Supporting All English Learners (ELs)

IMPLEMENT PROFICIENCY-BASED RATIOS FOR ENGLISH LEARNER TEACHERS

Virginia needs to better support English Learners. The current ratio of having one teacher for every 50 EL students isn't equitable or fair because **students have different needs**. Changing the law so each teacher has a number of students **based on their English proficiency** would make a big difference, especially for our Newcomer students, who are learning English for the first time.


The EL teacher ratio **should be amended** from 20 positions per 1,000 EL students (1 per 50) to a **sliding scale**.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
STUDENT RATIO	one position per 25 students	one position per 30 students	one position per 40 students	one position per 50 students

Priority 5 — Invest in Teachers and Support Staff

 **ELIMINATE THE SUPPORT-STAFF CAP**

Since the Great Recession in 2009, there's been a cap on state-funded support staff like nurses and social workers. These staff members are **crucial for helping students facing challenges**, and we currently fund some of these positions without any state support. The General Assembly has started undoing this unfair cap, but should do it completely to restore the funding for these critical staff.


 **INVEST IN TEACHER AND STAFF COMPENSATION**

Compared to other states, **Virginia's teacher salaries are not very competitive**. RPS has worked to increase pay, and the state has improved teachers' ability to negotiate, but **we still need help from the state to pay our staff fairly**. Virginia is also facing a shortage of school staff. To catch up to the national average for teacher pay, **we need to increase salaries by about 10 percent**. The General Assembly should keep working towards this goal.


Priority 6 — Support Localities in School Construction and Modernization

 **LET VOTERS FUND MODERN FACILITIES**


With about **\$25 billion in documented needs** statewide, we need the state to keep helping us build and update safe, modern buildings. We're asking the General Assembly to let us have an **optional 1% Local Sales Tax for school construction**. This means we can ask voters to increase the sales tax by 1 percent, and the money will go to building and updating schools.

 **FUND SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION GRANTS**

Given the state's infrastructure needs, we need the General Assembly to add **\$2.5 billion to the School Construction Grant and Assistance Program**. This includes \$500 million for direct grants in the **School Construction Grant Program** and \$2 billion for competitive grants in the **School Construction Assistance Program**.



For more updates and resources, visit the RPS website at rvaschools.net/advocacy.



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LCI Changes and Hold Harmless Proposals

We anticipate that the General Assembly will appropriate enough new funding that hold harmless funding will not be necessary. However, legislators have introduced several proposals to express the dire budget situation for school divisions seeing a loss of funding under Governor Youngkin’s budget proposal.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding		
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY24	FY25	FY26
FY 2024 Hold Harmless (House Calculation)	137 #1h	Carr			\$187,400,000	N/A	N/A
FY 2024 Hold Harmless (Senate Calculation)			137 #1s	Hashmi	\$282,613,431	N/A	N/A
Hold Harmless for Significant 2024-26 LCI Increases	125 #20h	Carr			N/A	\$51,900,000	\$52,500,000
Statewide Hold Harmless from 2024-26 LCI Update	125 #47h	Callsen	125 #8s	Deeds	N/A	\$92,800,000	\$92,000,000
Restore Payment in Lieu of Sales Tax on Groceries and Personal Hygiene Products	125 #11h	McNamara			N/A	\$121,300,000	\$121,800,000
Change LCI Formula to 3-Year Average			125 #15s	Hashmi	N/A	-\$1,500,000	-\$1,500,000

JLARC Omnibus Legislation Proposals

Several pieces of legislation have been introduced to implement many of the near-term recommendations of the JLARC report on Virginia’s K-12 funding formula. These pieces of legislation - some being referred to as omnibus bills - carry large fiscal impacts but would begin to correct some of the shortcomings in Virginia’s public education formulas.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
Near-Term JLARC Recommendations (House Estimate)	HB 624 125 #7h	Rasoul			\$924,100,000	\$936,300,000
Near-Term JLARC Recommendations (Senate Estimate)			SB 227 125 #11s	Hashmi	\$1,058,000,000	\$1,058,000,000
Add On for ELL and Students w/Disabilities			SB 228 125 #10s	Hashmi	\$590,200,000	\$597,900,000
Technical Updates to SOQ Positions and LCI			SB 128 125 #20s	VanValkenburg	\$43,500,000	\$43,500,000

At-Risk Add-On Proposals

Multiple bills and budget amendments have been filed to implement JLARC’s recommendations regarding the At-Risk Add-On formula, Virginia’s funding stream that supports school divisions with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. This legislation would have a significant positive impact on RPS funding.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
At-Risk Add-On Recommendations (House Estimate)	125 #13h 125 #51h	Jones McQuinn			\$285,800,000	\$289,600,000
At-Risk Add-On Recommendations (Senate Estimate)			125 #21s	Locke	\$251,000,000	\$251,000,000
All At-Risk Add-On Recommendations with Hold Harmless	HB 825 125 #28h	Cousins	SB 609 125 #1s	Aird	\$494,500,000	\$496,300,000

Mental Health Partnerships & Staffing Proposals

Legislators are aware of the fiscal cliff that school divisions face with federal stimulus funding expiring and have introduced several proposals in regards to mental health staffing.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
Mental Health Positions and Partnerships Grant Program	124 #37h	Carr			\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000
One-Time Funding to Replace Federal Funds for Mental Health	117 #1h 125 #2h	Rasoul			\$20,000,000	\$0
One-Time Funding to Replace Federal Funds for Mental Health			124 #50s	Deeds	\$30,000,000	\$0
School Mental Health Pilots Transfer from DBHDS			124 #4s	Craig	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000

RPS200 Extended Year Grants & Richmond Teacher Residency

Budget proposals have been introduced that would expand the extended school year grant program to support school divisions like RPS that are implementing programs like RPS 200.

Delegate Cousins has also introduced a budget amendment to expand the Richmond Teacher Residency program at VCU.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
Expand Teacher Residency Funds - Richmond	124 #47h	Cousins			N/A	\$600,000
Extended School Year Grant Program	124 #22h	Jones	125 #14s	Hashmi	N/A	\$10,750,000

Proficiency-Based Ratios for EL Teachers

The need to better support English Learner students has generated multiple pieces of legislation and approaches to decreasing English Learner teacher ratios. The costs of implementing lower ratios appears to be higher than anticipated due to increasing numbers of English Learners across the state.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
Increase English Learner Teacher Ratios from 20:1000 to 22:1000	125 #23h	Tran			\$12,900,000	\$13,900,000
Proficiency Based EL Teacher Ratios - Consolidated Levels	HB 1247 125 #33h	Maldonado			\$61,700,000	\$61,300,000
Proficiency Based EL Teacher Ratios - Expanded Levels (Old Estimate)	HB 828 125 #50h	Cousins			\$18,00,000	\$18,000,000
Proficiency Based EL Teacher Ratios - Expanded Levels			SB 272 125 #13s	Hashmi	\$61,700,000	\$61,300,000

Teacher Compensation Proposals

While the budget committees will ultimately decide how much teacher compensation can be increased above what the governor has proposed - a 1% bonus in FY25 and a 2% raise in FY26 - several pieces of legislation are moving through the legislature that would aim to increase teacher compensation to or above the national average.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
HB 1152 - Teacher Compensation At or Above National Average	125 #27h	Cordoza			COLA \$250,800,000	12% \$636,200,000
Direct Aid - Teacher Salary Increase			125 #25s	Rouse	5% \$307,219,343	Maintain 2% \$307,219,343
Direct Aid - Increase Teacher Salaries to the National Average (SB 104)			125 #26s	Lucas	3% \$314,400,000	7% \$759,700,000

Support Staff Proposals

In addition to legislation that would implement the JLARC recommendations to remove the support staff cap and other pre-Great Recession cuts, additional legislation has been proposed addressing specific support staff ratios, including school counselors and other specialized support staff positions.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
Remove Support Cap and Other pre-Great Recession Cuts			125 #32s	Deeds	\$312,000,000	\$312,000,000
Eliminate Support Staff Cap	125 #14h 125 #43h	Reid Simonds	125 #12s 125 #30s	Carroll Foy Favola	\$200,300,000	\$202,000,000
Increase Support Positions from 24:1000 to 26:1000			125 #22s	Carroll Foy	\$172,300,000	\$173,800,000
Increase Counselors from 1:325 to 1:250	HB 181 125 #12h	Feggans	SB 127 125 #16s	VanValkenburg	\$62,700,000	\$63,200,000
Increase Specialized Student Support Staff from 3:1000 to 4:1000 Students	HB 386 125 #6h HB 389 125 #42h	Hernandez McClure	125 #18s	VanValkenburg	\$57,200,000	\$57,900,000

School Construction Proposals

While the funding to address school construction and modernization carries a large price tag, these programs have proven effective in supporting school divisions with sharing the costs of infrastructure improvements.

Topic	House Proposals		Senate Proposals		Proposed Funding	
	Number	Patron	Number	Patron	FY25	FY26
School Construction Assistance Program (competitive grants)	125 #17h	Carr	125 #9s	Deeds	\$120,000,000	\$120,000,000
School Construction Assistance Program (competitive grants)	125 #25h	Cousins			\$920,000,000	\$920,000,000
School Construction Grant Program (formula grants)	125 #26h	Cousins			\$500,000,000	N/A

Advocating for RPS Priorities

Email, call, and visit legislators!

Visit www.virginiageneralassembly.gov to find legislator contact information. Sample letters are available on the RPS website at www.rvaschools.net/advocacy. In-person visits with legislators and their staff can be very impactful. Consider arranging a group visit to meet with members and share your stories about why investing in public education is so critical. Visit www.virginiageneralassembly.gov for more information and email Matthew Stanley (mstanley@rvaschools.net) if you need planning assistance.

Join advocacy partner events!

Follow RPS and state advocacy partners ([VEA](#), [Fund Our Schools](#), [Voices for Virginia's Children](#), [Virginia PTA](#)) for updates throughout session on advocacy opportunities and events. Be sure to join the Virginia Education Association for [an advocacy day and rally](#) on Monday, February 19.

Advocate through media. Tell your story!

Telling your story and advocating through media is an important part of increasing the impact of your advocacy. Consider posting on social media, writing Op-Eds or letters to the editor, or creating your own media to share. These are ways to reach a large audience with your message and increase our collective voice. Contact the RPS Media Relations team at mediarelations@rvaschools.net if you would like help sharing your story!

The Richmond Legislative Delegation

Senators



Lamont Bagby
District 14



Ghazala Hashmi
District 15

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- ★ [House District Map](#)
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Delegates



Betsy Carr
District 78



Rae Cousins
District 79



Michael Jones
District 77

Contact the House Appropriations Committee

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Contact the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

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