

2025 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 three 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 viriniageneralassembly.gov.

Priority 1 — Implement JLARC Funding Recommendations

In 2023, our state research agency (JLARC), found that Virginia has been **underfunding** K12 public education by **over \$3 billion**. They made 20 specific recommendations and five policy options to reform our school funding formula so that all students have the support they need to reach their full potential, regardless of their zip code.

Below are details on some of the most important recommendations that will support RPS and our students.



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 reducing this unfair cap, but should undo it completely to restore the funding for these critical staff.



Reform the Local Composite Index

Richmond faces budget challenges despite increasing property values and income. The latest state analysis suggests Richmond should pay for 57.4% of school costs, **leading to less money from the state**. The JLARC 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.



The At-Risk Add-On, English Learners, and Students with Disabilities

Additional recommendations aim to ensure that funding meets **the needs of students facing the greatest barriers to success**, including those with disabilities, English Learners, and students from under-resourced communities. By moving the At-Risk Add-On program (supplemental funding for low-income students) into the Standards of Quality (the state's main funding formula) and **shifting to student-based funding add-ons** for special education and English Learners, the proposals would make funding **more equitable, predictable, and tied to actual costs**.

Support SB977, patroned by Senator Hashmi, to implement these recommendations!

Priority 2 — Support Localities in School Construction & Modernization



Fund school construction grants

Given the state's infrastructure needs, we need the General Assembly to fund **the School Construction Grant and Assistance Program**. The Governor has proposed **\$290 million** for competitive grants in the **School Construction Assistance Program** and we encourage the General Assembly to build on this proposal with further funding to meet the \$25 billion in documented school infrastructure needs across the state.

Support doubling the Governor's proposed \$290 million in school construction grants!



Let voters fund modern facilities

With local governments struggling to keep up with public infrastructure demands, 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.

Support SB1307, patroned by Senator McPike!

Priority 3 — Invest in Student Mental Health



Fund school-based mental health integration

School-based mental health services encompass a range of multi-tiered supports and programs designed to enhance access to mental health resources across the care spectrum. The state should help **fund community-based mental health providers within schools** as a critical measure to improve access to care, foster stronger community ties, and ease the strain on school professionals grappling with the growing youth mental health crisis.

Support Budget Amendment 295 #5h for \$7.5M to support school-based mental health partnerships!



Telehealth

By fostering national partnerships, utilizing state infrastructure funding, and optimizing in-school Medicaid programs, Virginia can **expand student access to mental telehealth services**. This approach ensures schools receive the necessary technical support, expertise, and coordination to bill Medicaid accurately and efficiently.

Support HB1945, patroned by Delegate Reaser!



Virginia Commission on Youth Study

Given the significant needs of Virginia's youth in addressing mental health issues, we encourage further study of this issue by the Virginia Commission on Youth. Such a study would review policies to support student mental health in Virginia's elementary and secondary schools, with a focus on **improving funding and other resources, training and professional development, partnerships with health services, curriculum development, research and evaluation, and public awareness campaigns**.

Support HJ441, patroned by Delegate Martinez!



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