

# Legislative Advocacy Update

Update for the Richmond City School Board

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Venue: Richmond City School Board Work Session

Date: April 7, 2025

## Post-Session Headlines

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The Governor has recommended a significant reduction in funding to fully eliminate the support staff cap.

- The current ratio (FY25) of support staff to students is 24:1000.
- The legislature passed full elimination (FY26) with a ratio of 27.9:1000, costing \$223m.
- The Governor has proposed reducing the cap to a ratio of 25.5:1000, costing \$84.7m.
- This is approximately a 2/3 reduction, so we expect the \$3.1m we would receive under the GA's conference budget would reduce by a corresponding percentage = \$2m less for RPS in FY26.
- Other areas of K-12 education funding remain intact, but all budget proposals are at risk if the Governor and General Assembly have a stalemate over his proposed amendments.

Among other recommendations and vetoes, the Governor vetoed SB1307, which would allow for 1% sales tax referenda for school construction.

- [SB1307](#) passed by margins of 62-33 and 27-12, so it is possible that the legislature will override his veto.
- Some of the Governor's [vetoes](#) include the following topics: [chronic absenteeism](#), [leave for employee association officers](#), [written notice of non-continuation of continuing teacher contracts](#), [employee suspensions](#), [the calculation of a proportionality score in school accountability calculations to address disparities](#), [culturally responsive and language-appropriate mental health support and services](#).
- Some of the Governor non-veto [recommendations](#) include the following topics: [cell phone-free education policies](#), [safe home storage of prescription drugs and firearms](#), [barrier crimes](#), [SOL assessment administration](#), [alternative pathways to provisional licensure for CTE teachers](#), [indoor air quality standards](#), and [high-quality instructional materials](#).

The General Assembly reconvenes on April 2 to consider the Governor's actions.

- The Governor's budget amendments, vetoes, and legislative amendments will be voted on individually and the budget will then be returned to the Governor, who may still veto the entire measure. If a veto takes place, the General Assembly will return to Richmond in a Special Session to craft a new budget for the Governor to consider.

## The Governor's Budget Actions

### Investments in Public Education

- Governor's amendments provide \$166.1 million more than introduced HB 1600 and \$452.6 million over Chapter 2, including:
  - \$193.4 million in required technical updates;
    - \$110.7 million for English Language Learners
  - \$84.7 million to increase the support cap to 25.5 positions per 1,000 students;
    - Current cap is 24:1,000
  - \$52.8 million for enhanced special education;
  - \$25.8 million for maintaining testing contract;
  - \$25 million in Opportunity Scholarships;
  - \$25 million in School Performance & Supports, and
  - \$15 million for College Partnership Lab Schools.
- Provides \$134.4 million for a \$1,000 bonus in June 2025 for funded instructional support personnel with no local match required.
- Increases ongoing investments in early childhood programs by \$7.5 million and makes policy changes that increase available slots by 7,000 slots and reduce waiting lists.
  - Ensures high-quality early childhood learning to over 52,000 children across Virginia.

## 2025 Legislative Advocacy Priorities - At-a-Glance Status Updates

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Informed by existing legislative priorities, school division needs, and student and school board feedback, the RPS Legislative Advocacy Priorities address K-12 funding reform, school construction and modernization, and student mental health.

1. Implement JLARC Funding Recommendations, including:
  - Eliminating the Support Staff Cap (Impacted by Governor's Actions)
  - *Reforming the Local Composite Index*
  - *Codifying the At-Risk Add-On Program and add-ons for students with disabilities and English Learners*
  
2. Support Localities in School Construction and Modernization, including:
  - *Funding the School Construction Assistance Program to meet statewide demand*
  - Permitting localities to hold 1% sales tax referenda for school construction (Impacted by Governor's Actions)
  
3. Investing in Student Mental Health, including:
  - *Funding School-Based Mental Health Integration partnerships*
  - Expanding telehealth partnerships and infrastructure support for school divisions
  - Further study of state policies to support student mental health

(Underlined items progressed this year, italicized items failed.)