

# Legislative Advocacy Update

Virginia General Assembly Update for the Richmond City School Board

Presented By: Matthew Stanley, Director, Advocacy & Outreach

Venue: Richmond City School Board Work Session

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## Key Updates — School Construction & Modernization

### Our Ask: Renew the Commission on School Construction and Modernization.

The Commission, created to assess school facility needs and recommend funding solutions, is set to expire in 2026. The General Assembly should reauthorize it to continue its work supporting localities with data, technical assistance, and equitable funding recommendations. Reauthorizing the Commission will ensure Virginia continues to make progress in addressing its \$25+ billion backlog in school infrastructure needs.

- [HB264](#) (Simonds) would extend the Commission until 2029, and [HB644](#) (Askew) and [SB498](#) (Aird) would also extend it with a requirement to create a 10-year capital roadmap to address statewide school construction needs.

### Our Ask: Let voters fund modern facilities.

The General Assembly should once again approve legislation allowing localities to hold referenda for a 1% local sales tax dedicated solely to school construction and modernization. This measure, which passed twice with bipartisan support before being vetoed, gives communities a local tool to fund urgently needed school improvements while maintaining voter oversight and accountability.

- [HB334](#) (Rasoul) and [SB66](#) (McPike) have been introduced to authorize localities to impose a 1% sales tax that would support school construction and modernization. [SB607](#) (Lucas) has also been introduced with alternate language.

### Our Ask: Fund per-pupil infrastructure grants.

The 2022 school construction package provided a one-time per-pupil allocation for infrastructure improvements across Virginia. This approach helped local divisions like Richmond make critical repairs and upgrades. We ask the General Assembly to reinstate this program with a minimum statewide appropriation of \$500 million, ensuring that every student learns in a safe, modern, and well-equipped school.

- Delegate Cousins introduced budget amendment [Item 125 #3h](#) to fund \$500 million in school infrastructure funding to school divisions, and presented it to the House Appropriations Committee on January 28. [Watch her provide testimony!](#)

## Key Updates — Reform Virginia’s K–12 Funding Formula

### Our Ask: Implement JLARC recommendations.

In 2023, JLARC found that Virginia underfunds K–12 education by over \$3 billion annually and recommended transitioning to a student-based funding model. The General Assembly should implement these recommendations to ensure funding reflects student need rather than outdated staffing formulas.

- [HB92](#) (Delegate Rasoul) and [SB90](#) (Senator Favola) would codify key component of JLARC’s recommendations; funding add-ons for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learner students.
- Companion budget amendments totalling \$740 million over two years have been introduced to fund these add-ons – see items [125 #5h](#) (Simonds), [125 #1s](#), [125 #7s](#), and [125 #8s](#) (Favola).
- If funded at these levels, RPS could begin receiving approximately \$9 million per year in additional state direct aid based on our current ADM and LCI.
- [The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis](#) has further information on this legislation and division estimates.

### Our Ask: Reform the Local Composite Index (LCI).

Richmond’s LCI continues to overstate the city’s ability to pay for schools, resulting in less state support. JLARC recommended reforms to the LCI, including using a multi-year average of income, property, and sales data to smooth volatility and better reflect fiscal reality. Adopting these changes would direct more equitable funding to localities like Richmond.

- We’re tracking several pieces of legislation dealing with LCI reform, and as of today, they’re being referred to the Joint Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education Funding that’s expected to meet after session ends.

## Key Updates — Strengthen Student Mental Health Supports

### Our Ask: Increase specialized support staff ratios.

Students are facing greater mental health challenges than ever. The General Assembly should increase the Standards of Quality ratio for specialized student support staff—such as school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses—to at least four per 1,000 students. This investment will ensure that every school has the staff needed to address student well-being and reduce barriers to learning.

- [HB195](#) (McQuinn) and [SB33](#) (Favola) would provide more flexibility to use At-Risk Add-On funding to support initiatives to support both the physical and mental health of students in public schools, including the hiring of registered nurses and advanced practice registered nurses.

### Our Ask: Support telehealth expansion and Medicaid alignment.

By investing in telehealth infrastructure and improving Medicaid billing processes, the state can help schools connect more students to licensed mental health professionals. This approach is cost-effective, sustainable, and critical for divisions with limited local mental health resources.

- [SB73](#) (Srinivasan) would require the Virginia Department of Education to hiring 2 Medicaid Billing Navigators to support school divisions so that we're able to fully leverage Medicaid funding opportunities to enhance student health services.

### Our Ask: Expand community-based partnerships.

Virginia can rapidly expand access to mental health services by creating a Community-Based Partnership Grant Program that funds collaborations between school divisions and local mental health providers. These partnerships will enhance access to care, reduce wait times, and connect students to licensed professionals who can serve them within their schools.

- We are tracking several budget amendments introduced to provide funding through various initiatives and community partners, including \$2.5 million in [community schools development and implementation planning grants](#).

## Recent Advocacy Activities



# Upcoming Timeline & Key Advocacy Opportunities

## Show up in numbers on President's Day!

Virginia Education Association Lobby Day, the biggest education advocacy event of the General Assembly session!  
Monday, February 16 | 7:30 a.m. | Register at: [www.mobilize.us/vea/event/851111](http://www.mobilize.us/vea/event/851111)

## The rest of February – the key month to flex your advocacy muscle!

- 📢 This week: Advocacy Action Alerts begin! [Opt-in for direct updates.](#) 📢
- February 22: House and Senate budgets proposals released

## March 2026

- Conference budget adopted
- March 14: Session adjourns

For email updates with advocacy opportunities, form letters, and more information, please sign up for our advocacy email list!

