

City of Richmond



LEVAR M. STONEY
MAYOR

July 3, 2018

The Honorable William M. Stanley
Chairman, Senate Local Government Committee
13508 Booker T. Washington Highway
Moneta, Virginia 24121

Dear Sen. Stanley,

Thank you for your letter and your interest in the children of Richmond. Your letter raises important and urgent issues, particularly insofar as the question of responsibility is concerned. I agree with our Superintendent that conditions in many of our school facilities are heartbreaking and that they beg critical questions regarding both *Brown II* and Article VIII, Section 1 of the Virginia Constitution.

Both *Brown II* and the Virginia Constitution speak to the responsibilities of the Commonwealth, not the locality. Article VIII, Section I of the Virginia Constitution clearly articulates that the General Assembly must “seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained.” Yet despite the requirements of the Constitution, state funding has decreased. Since 2009, state direct aid per student has fallen for Richmond Public Schools by 16%, after adjusting for inflation.

We have done our best to compensate for the Commonwealth’s shortfall. Since 2015, as a city we have increased our contribution to Richmond Public Schools by more than \$30 million.

Unfortunately, Richmond is not alone. Many of my peer localities across the Commonwealth are similarly struggling to compensate for the General Assembly’s negligence in adequately funding public education. Statewide, state direct aid has fallen in the past decade, with local governments investing above their required share to attempt to meet the needs of their students. Richmond’s contribution in 2016 was 96% above the local required match.

It should be no surprise to you or your colleagues that, as more of our local dollars have been required to fill the gap left to us by the Commonwealth, critical items like maintenance have been deferred. It is my opinion that it is in fact the Commonwealth’s budget policies that are short-changing our students.

I am working with my administration on our response to the change in our city charter. While I appreciate your offer to meet with your advisor, I am more than confident in our ability to do our job.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L.M. Stoney', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Levar M. Stoney