



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Secretary of Education

July 10, 2023

Hal E. Greer, Director
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission
919 East Main Street Suite 2101
Richmond, VA 23219

Director Greer,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on JLARC's report on the *K-12 Standards of Quality Funding Formula*. JLARC's analysis illuminates the complexity of Virginia's current indecipherable state funding formula which underscores the need for reforming key elements to be more student focused and outcome driven.

Regrettably, the report lacks an assessment of the effectiveness of the current Standards of Quality in meeting the educational needs of students. Furthermore, the decision to exclude the two most recent fiscal years in your analysis results in an inaccurate picture of the current fiscal reality and fails to capture the impact of recent historic budget increases, especially in teacher pay. As you know, the FY23-24 budget included \$3.2 billion in additional K-12 direct aid and Governor Youngkin's introduced amendments included an additional \$427.7 million, both of which amount to the largest education budget in history.

Nevertheless, the report makes it clear that without reforms, increased investments in K-12 spending likely will not translate into improved student outcomes. As you point out in your report, the lack of clarity makes it difficult for school divisions and policymakers to allocate resources effectively. The current formula contains arbitrary and restrictive provisions that limit the discretion of local school leaders to make effective resource allocations that will best meet student need. The Commonwealth's formula is also antiquated and uses measures that were necessary proxies in earlier eras due to the dearth of student-level data available at the state level.

The Administration has outlined necessary reforms to our K-12 public education system in the report *Our Commitment to Virginians: High Expectations and Excellence for All Students* and the report *To Promote Excellence and Higher Student Achievement in Response to House Bill 938*, the latter of which focuses on four key areas of reform highlighted in your study: fixing our accreditation system, stronger proficiency standards on Standards of Learning tests, instructional and student improvement in math to pair with our focus on literacy, and better pathways for career readiness including reforming the funding of career and technical education.

In order to meet our Constitutionally mandated goal of establishing and continually maintaining a high-quality education for all students, we must not only build off the historic investments made over the past two years, but reform our system to drive dollars into the classroom in a way that improves outcomes for our students.

With appreciation,

Aimee Rogstad Guidera

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Secretary of Education

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