



THE FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400, Falls Church, VA 22042

Fairfax County
Public Schools

571.423.1075
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March 9, 2021

Governor Ralph S. Northam
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam:

On behalf of the Fairfax County School Board, thank you for the collective leadership you and the General Assembly have shown in protecting state K-12 education funding from the effects of the pandemic and for further enhancing state education funding, particularly increasing the support position Cost of Competing Adjustment (COCA) to help address the unique budget pressures created by our high local cost of living and competitive wage market. However, we write to seek additional help to allow us to take better advantage of allocated state salary funding.

The actual cost of a salary increase in Fairfax vastly exceeds state provided funding, making it far more difficult for us to take full advantage of state salary incentive funding than it is for most other jurisdictions. Due to the Local Composite Index and other factors, the state's calculated share of a 5% salary increase in Fairfax is \$22.7M, which leaves over \$100M in local fiscal impact. A 3% increase, in line with our budget request to the County, has a \$60.3M local cost and an increase at the minimum 2% to qualify for partial state funding costs over \$40M locally.

We are actively working with our county partners to find the resources needed to take advantage of available state salary incentive funding but each of these dollar figures represents an incredible strain on already tight local revenues. Our teachers and staff have gone above and beyond to provide instruction and other services to our students and community throughout the COVID health emergency but they did not receive a raise in FY21 despite rising to these challenges and despite rising benefit costs – they are more than deserving of an increase. Not being able to provide appropriate salary increases would also place us at a competitive disadvantage in recruitment and retention relative to our regional peers.

We appreciate that local salary increases of less than 5% can now qualify for partial state funding, but please consider additional grants of flexibility to help us address our ongoing local match challenges. Additional flexibility could take the form of:

- Further reducing or eliminating local match requirements,
- Allowing some or all the unused portion of allocated funding for school divisions providing partial raises to revert to the school division to be used for other educational needs,

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- Allowing a combination of salary and bonus to cumulatively meet matching requirements, or
- Allowing unused salary funding to carry over for potential salary actions in FY23.

At a minimum, consider retaining unused salary funds for K-12 education purposes so they do not simply revert to the General Fund. Unused funds could be transferred to another education line item, Learning Loss Instructional Supports for example, and allocated statewide. This way, jurisdictions that couldn't take full advantage of the salary funding would at least retain a portion of what they didn't use, it would keep the funding allocated to K12 education as intended, and all school divisions would benefit.

Again, we appreciate your support for public education and thank you for considering our request. We are happy to discuss these ideas further, so please reach out if we can be helpful in any way.

Sincerely,



Ricardy J. Anderson, Ed.D.
Chairman
Mason District Representative

cc: Atif Qarni, Secretary of Education
Members, Fairfax County General Assembly Delegation
Scott Brabrand, Ed.D., Superintendent, Fairfax County Public Schools
Members, Fairfax County School Board