



April 6, 2020

Dear Governor Northam,

We are the superintendents who lead the eight largest school divisions in Virginia, and we applaud the recent actions you have taken to keep Virginians safe. We also appreciate the open lines of communication you and your staff have maintained with local governments and school divisions as we all work to navigate through these difficult times. We fully understand how challenging the current situation is for the state and local governments across Virginia.

Our eight school divisions educate approximately 600,000 students in the Commonwealth; spanning Northern Virginia, Richmond and Hampton Roads. While these divisions are larger than most, they share many of the challenges and opportunities common to urban, suburban, and rural school settings. School divisions and local governments are fully committed to educating our children, but as you know, our resources are limited, and we depend on a strong partnership between local and state funding sources. We appreciate the efforts by your administration to advocate for and increase state funding for K-12. Even still, long after the end of the Great Recession, schools across Virginia still feel the effects of policy decisions made over a decade ago.

As you work through potential changes to HB 29 and HB 30, to adjust to what appears to be an inevitable downturn in state revenues, we have a few requests for you to consider. Please preserve as much as possible the progress recently made to increase necessary funding for our public schools by holding school divisions harmless where possible. Should revisions be necessary to education spending, we urge you not to change the education funding formulas, which could have longer term implications on our education funding.

More specifically, we request that you restore the flexible use of the Lottery Proceed Funds for K-12 that has been in place since 2017, as well as eliminate the proposed required local match to draw down those funds (HB30, Item 145 #17c). School divisions and local governments are already anticipating difficult financial times, so the language in this particular budget item would impose an additional undue burden on school divisions already struggling to meet the needs of their students.

School divisions have long depended on the lottery proceeds funding to meet particular needs of students within our communities and have each allocated this funding in different ways. It is imperative that schools continue to receive these funds with the ability to use them where

most needed and without any required local match – now is not the time to reverse course on local flexibility.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues. If you have any questions or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to any one of us.

We are grateful for your leadership in these uncharted waters. Together we will get through this.

With sincere respect and appreciation,

Superintendent Jared Cotton
Chesapeake Public Schools

Superintendent Mervin B. Daugherty
Chesterfield County Public Schools

Superintendent Scott Brabrand
Fairfax County Public Schools

Superintendent Amy E. Cashwell
Henrico County Public Schools

Superintendent Eric Williams
Loudoun County Public Schools

Superintendent Sharon Byrdsong
Norfolk Public Schools

Superintendent Steven L. Walts
Prince William County Public Schools

Superintendent Aaron Spence
Virginia Beach Public Schools