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June 19, 2019

Members, Virginia Board of Education
P. O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

On behalf of the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo), I extend our appreciation to you for holding public hearings this summer to solicit comments on the condition and needs of public education in the Commonwealth and to explicitly include representatives from VACo in that process. Your commitment to public outreach is commendable. This letter provides some comments from the perspective of local government.

Support for public education has consistently been a priority for counties in Virginia, as it has for our Association. Local governments recognize the vital importance of preparing students to succeed as engaged and informed citizens, continuing learners, and contributing members of the workforce. To this end, local governments are committed partners investing in our schools above and beyond required local effort because our constituents view the success of our students and our schools as essential to the well-being of our local communities, state, and nation.

Though our commitment to public education is strong, our resources are limited, and we rely on the state to be a strong partner in funding K-12. We appreciate efforts by the Board of Education, the Governor, and the General Assembly to advocate for and restore state funding of K-12. However, a decade after the Great Recession, we continue to struggle with the effects of policy decisions undertaken during that time which drastically scaled back state support. Local governments invest approximately \$4 billion beyond the local required effort for Standards of Quality (SOQ) programs. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, local investment in Virginia's K-12 education system constitutes the majority share of total funding and places Virginia 10th in the nation in percentage of funding from local sources, even as public schools serve increasing numbers of students with higher-level needs.

We appreciate your continued advocacy for the state to provide SOQ funding commensurate with prevailing local practice. We are especially encouraged by your continued recommendation to eliminate the cap on support positions that was imposed in 2009. Elimination of the cap would allow localities to invest local dollars in other areas of high need for K-12,

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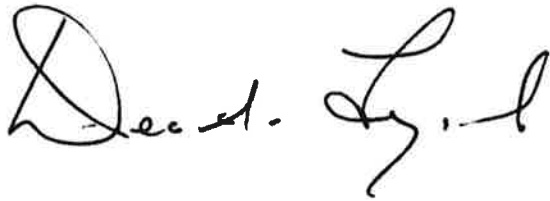
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including but not limited to additional resources for teacher development, English Learners, support personnel, and issues of equity. As each community in Virginia has unique challenges and opportunities, we ask that any additional SOQ proposals contain as much local flexibility as possible to allow school divisions and local governments the ability to attend to areas of the greatest need.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this conversation, and thank you for your service to Virginia. We look forward to working with you on these issues of critical importance to the future of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail on the "h".

Dean Lynch
Executive Director
Virginia Association of Counties

cc: Members, Education Steering Committee, Virginia Association of Counties