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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

February 23, 2021

The Honorable Janet D. Howell
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations
Pocahontas Building, Room E509
900 East Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Pocahontas Building, Room W1304
900 East Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Chairwoman Howell and Chairman Torian:

As President of the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo), I write to commend you on your leadership and hard work in developing budgets that invest in meeting the challenges of Virginia's recovery from the pandemic and positioning the Commonwealth to succeed in the future. We are particularly appreciative of your efforts to ensure that local school divisions are held harmless with "no loss" funding to offset decreases in student enrollment resultant from the pandemic. We also appreciate your efforts to provide salary incentives for state supported K-12 staff; however, as you work toward a conference report in the days ahead, we would respectfully offer suggestions that would provide additional flexibility for local governments in order to ensure that local budget stresses do not limit school divisions' ability to provide compensation increases for K-12 staff.

As you aware, the proposed Senate budget contains a 3% salary increase for K-12 staff ([Item 145 #6s](#)) and the proposed House budget contains a 5% salary increase for K-12 staff ([Item 145 #10h](#)). While VACo supports efforts to fund strategies addressing the teacher shortage in the Commonwealth, we have concerns that without additional flexibility for localities, finding the necessary local matching funds to provide these salary increases will be difficult for many of our members given the impacts of COVID-19 on local revenues and expenses. In recognition of the challenges facing local governments in the upcoming fiscal year, we would ask that you consider a temporary suspension or extension of the local match requirement.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. Support for public education has consistently been a priority for counties in Virginia, as it has for our Association. However, we humbly ask for additional flexibility to allow maximum participation in this effort. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of assistance to you or to your staff in any way.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey C. McKay
President

1207 E. Main St., Suite 300
Richmond, Va. 23219-3627

Phone: 804.788.6652
Fax: 804.788.0083

Email: mail@vaco.org
Website: www.vaco.org

cc: Members, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
Members, House Appropriations Committee
Members, Virginia Association of Counties Board of Directors
April Kees, Staff Director, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
Anne E. Oman, Staff Director, House Appropriations Committee