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February 28, 2024

The Honorable Glenn A. Youngkin
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin,

I write on behalf of the Virginia Association of Counties to encourage you to approve HB 805 (Rasoul) / SB 14 (McPike). This legislation, which was introduced at our request, would permit any county or city to impose an additional local sales and use tax of up to 1 percent, if initiated by a resolution of the local governing body and approved by voters at a local referendum. The revenues of such a local tax would be used solely for capital projects for the construction or renovation of schools. Currently, this authority is limited to the qualifying localities of Charlotte, Gloucester, Halifax, Henry, Mecklenburg, Northampton, Patrick, and Pittsylvania Counties and the City of Danville. It has been an absolute game changer for these localities.

According to the Commission on School Construction and Modernization, the majority of public schools in Virginia are 50 years or older and the estimated cost of construction needed to replace and modernize these buildings is \$25 billion. This issue is not restricted to urban, suburban, or rural areas of Virginia, its impacts are felt across the Commonwealth. Funding for school construction and renovation is one of the biggest concerns and responsibilities of local governments in the Commonwealth and has been almost solely a local responsibility for decades. The condition of the facilities in which children are educated impacts their ability to learn.

These bills do not require any locality to raise additional revenues, unless the locally elected leaders of a locality, and their citizens, both vote to do so through voter referendum. This gives parents and citizens a voice in how their children's schools are funded. We hope that you will agree that no child in Virginia should have to go to a school with a leaky roof, an insufficient HVAC system, or one that was built prior to World War I. Every child deserves to go to a safe and modern school. This bill gives another tool to local governments to ensure that this happens.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to discuss this issue further with you or with your staff, and may be reached at dlynch@vaco.org or 804-343-2511.

Sincerely,

Dean A. Lynch, CAE
Executive Director

CC: Members, Virginia Association of Counties Board of Directors
The Honorable Sam Rasoul
The Honorable Jeremy S. McPike

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