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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 67

Offered January 10, 2024

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Establishing a joint committee of the House Committee on Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Education and Health to study fair school funding reform. Report.

Patrons—Simonds, Sullivan and Watts

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Virginia, like many other states, chronically underfunds its system of public elementary and secondary education based on an analysis of student needs; and

WHEREAS, Virginia, unlike many other states, has not made systemic changes to improve its public school funding formula and fully fund its system of public elementary and secondary education to fully meet student needs as required pursuant to Sections 1 and 2 of Article VIII of the Constitution of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission performed a crucial first step in the direction of fair school funding reform by conducting a two-year study and publishing its findings and recommendations in its July 2023 report, "Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula"; and

WHEREAS, it is now imperative to take the next step by considering and taking action on such recommendations and making such other changes as the General Assembly deems necessary and appropriate to establish a fair and equitable system of public school funding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint committee of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health be established to study fair school funding reform. The joint committee shall have a total membership of eight members, consisting of five members of the House Committee on Education to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates upon the recommendation of the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and three members of the Senate Committee on Education and Health to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules upon the recommendation of the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health. The joint committee shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership.

In conducting its study, the joint committee shall:

1. With such funds as may be provided for such purpose pursuant to the general appropriation act, work with staff of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations to identify and commission an independent firm by August 30, 2024, to produce an adequacy cost study on Virginia's K-12 public schools. Such a firm shall have experience over the past decade producing a similar cost adequacy study for a state legislature using an evidence-based approach. Such study shall include, at minimum: (i) adequacy cost studies that identify (a) a base funding level for students without special needs; (b) per-pupil weights for students with special needs, where weights can be applied to the base funding level; (c) a base funding level for students who are not economically disadvantaged; (d) per-pupil weights for students who are economically disadvantaged, where weights can be applied to the base funding level; (e) a base funding level for students who are not English language learners; and (f) per-pupil weights for students who are English language learners, where weights can be applied to the base funding level and (ii) an analysis of the effects of concentrations of poverty on adequacy targets. Such study shall account for Standards of Learning and school accreditation standards adopted by the Board of Education and funding weights that could be applied to reach similar adequacy targets for the student groups identified in clause (i);

2. Create a public engagement plan and form as many steering committees as it deems necessary for receiving input and feedback from community stakeholders, including the Secretary of Education, parents, teachers, students, school division finance officers, other school staff, and association leaders who represent teachers, parents, division superintendents, school principals, urban school divisions, rural school divisions, mid-sized school divisions, students with disabilities, English language learner students, the business community, and tertiary schools of education;

3. Utilize the findings from the adequacy cost study conducted pursuant to subdivision 1, recommendations from the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission in its July 2023 report, "Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula," and any stakeholder input and feedback received pursuant to subdivision 2 to produce a set of recommendations on transitioning Virginia's K-12 funding system to one that is student need-based; and

4. Submit the recommendations produced pursuant to subdivision 3 to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations by November 1, 2025.

58 Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates. Legal,  
59 research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the joint committee shall be provided by the  
60 Division of Legislative Services and the staff of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate  
61 Committee on Finance and Appropriations. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of  
62 Education. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint committee for this study,  
63 upon request.

64 The joint committee shall be limited to four meetings for the 2024 interim and four meetings for the 2025  
65 interim. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require the written authorization of the  
66 chairman of the joint committee and the respective Clerk. If a companion joint resolution of the other  
67 chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required.

68 The joint committee shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2024, and for the  
69 second year by October 31, 2025, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated  
70 Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the next  
71 Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall state whether the joint  
72 committee intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and  
73 recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports shall  
74 be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the  
75 processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.