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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 2, 2026

Requesting the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, in collaboration with the Department of Education, to study the feasibility and efficacy of offering dependents of public elementary and secondary school teachers reduced rate in-state tuition at public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth for the purpose of improving retention rates of public school teachers in the Commonwealth. Report.

Patron—Helmer

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, the cost of higher education increased at a rate of 4.63 percent per year nationally through 2023 and tuition increases have continued to outpace wage growth; and

WHEREAS, the total cost of public higher education for in-state undergraduates in the Commonwealth increased at an average annual rate of 1.77 percent between the 2018–2019 and 2021–2022 school years; and

WHEREAS, the total cost of public higher education for in-state undergraduates in the Commonwealth increased by another 3.3 percent between the 2021–2022 school year and 2022–2023 school years, and increased by 4.3 percent during the 2024–2025 school year; and

WHEREAS, the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia reported that the total cost of public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth once again increased by an average of 2.1 percent for the 2025–2026 school year and additionally reported that the Commonwealth's costs for in-state undergraduate tuition and fees for four-year public institutions of higher education are higher than the national average; and

WHEREAS, teaching vacancies in public elementary and secondary education in the Commonwealth more than doubled between 2019 and 2021, and the number of teaching vacancies again spiked sharply during and following the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, improving retention rates and mitigating public school teacher shortages in the Commonwealth is critical to ensuring the continued fulfillment of the Commonwealth's constitutional duty to provide a high quality public education system for all children, and it is therefore imperative to provide educators with incentives to attain and remain in public school teaching positions in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, in collaboration with the Department of Education, be requested to study the feasibility and efficacy of offering dependents of public elementary and secondary school teachers reduced rate in-state tuition at public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth for the purpose of improving retention rates of public school teachers in the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, in collaboration with the Department of Education, shall (i) analyze the financial feasibility of offering dependents of public school teachers in the Commonwealth reduced rate in-state tuition at public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth; (ii) evaluate the potential for such incentive plan to effectively improve public teacher retention rates in the Commonwealth; (iii) identify potential terms of employment to which teachers would consent or that teachers would be required to satisfy in order to be eligible for the reduced rate tuition for their dependents, including extending the length of the teacher's contract period beyond the standard contractual period or establishing prerequisite instructional hours, teaching days, or months of employment; and (iv) identify other potential criteria for eligibility, including requirements for residency in the Commonwealth, if any, for teachers and their dependents or setting a maximum number of eligible dependents per eligible teacher.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia by the Department of Education. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia for this study, upon request.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2026, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2027 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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