

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY - 2026 SESSION

CHAPTER 791

An Act to require the Head Start State Collaboration Office at the Department of Education to develop and recommend to the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education for endorsement a report summarizing the state of Head Start and Early Head Start in the Commonwealth.

[H 211]

Approved April 13, 2026

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *It is the goal of the Commonwealth to maximize the availability of evidence-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs to eligible families in the Commonwealth. In furtherance of such goal, the Head Start State Collaboration Office at the Department of Education shall, no later than December 1, 2026, develop and recommend to the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education for endorsement a report summarizing the state of Head Start and Early Head Start in the Commonwealth. Such report shall address:*

1. Trends in funding, parent demand, enrollment, and costs per child from pre-COVID-19 pandemic to the present, including total annual federal funding and funded enrollment, a summary of change in scope requests submitted by grant recipients to the federal Office of Head Start, a summary of grant awards relinquished by recipient agencies, and the range of funded per-child costs by age and region and how such costs compare to per-child costs generated by the Department of Education's cost-of-quality or benchmarking models for children of equivalent ages;

2. Barriers to maximization of Head Start funding and slots in the Commonwealth, including regional variations in cost of living relative to income eligibility limits for Head Start eligible families; a summary of identified barriers for families impacting parental demand for Head Start services, including transportation, program hours of service, and alignment between need and availability at the local level; and a summary of identified operational challenges for Head Start grant recipients, including credential requirements, workforce turnover and shortages, facility and infrastructure needs, and operational and service delivery impacts;

3. Strengths and challenges in fiscal sustainability for Head Start grant recipients, including (i) an assessment of the extent to which recipients are maximizing all available funding sources to support comprehensive or wraparound services and (ii) recommendations to develop and implement a framework for grant recipients to assess and leverage existing funding streams in their regions;

4. Trends in performance, quality improvement, and impact, including growth and results on the Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5) system established pursuant to § 22.1-289.05 of the Code of Virginia, federal monitoring and accountability results, and child growth and school readiness outcomes as measured by program assessment or statewide measures; and

5. The Commonwealth's and local grant recipients' readiness to respond to changes in the federal funding context, such as a change in overall available funding or a change in funding structure, and a plan to ensure continuity of care for Head Start families under such changes.