
2017 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT

I. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The strength of our communities determines the strength of our democracy. Emotional, social, and economic poverty weakens the fabric of our society and threatens our democracy. Policy leaders must ensure access to opportunities and invest the proper resources necessary for all children to grow up in nurturing surroundings, and to reconnect and strengthen the bonds of individuals and institutions in communities so that they thrive and favorably compete in the global economy.

A PLATFORM FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

VML endorses the National League of Cities' Platform for Children and Families that recognizes that strong communities are built on a foundation of strong families and neighborhoods. VML supports and encourages efforts by our communities and the state that emphasize:

- **Opportunities to learn and grow:** family literacy programs, quality out-of-school time programs and early childhood programs;
- **Safe neighborhoods to call home:** sufficient state support for local law enforcement, juvenile justice, and prisoner re-entry programs;
- **Healthy lifestyles & environment:** improving access to healthy foods, physical activity and recreation programs; and
- **Financially fit families:** workforce development, curbing predatory lenders, and increasing access to low-cost bank accounts and mainstream financial services.

VML supports approaches (such as the Virginia Grocery Incentive Fund as one example) to provide financial and technical support for businesses to help expand and

ensure greater access to healthy food for residents of the state.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ISSUES & FUNDING

Federal, state and local governments share the same citizens and same taxpayers. Local governments request a restoration of a meaningful and fiscally-balanced intergovernmental partnership in human services and education.

A working partnership.

- The federal and state governments should allow local governments maximum flexibility in developing and funding public/private partnerships to address human service needs.
- Local government must be a partner with the state and federal government in the process of developing regulations, policies, and allocation methods.
- The State should require interagency review of regulations to reconcile existing conflicts and to avoid duplication or conflict among agencies.
- The State should share data with communities and build a comprehensive human services data base to promote greater planning coordination and evaluation of services.

Funding commitments. Human services funding formulae should reflect identified needs, adequate to meet those needs, and not pit localities against each other. Equity in funding cannot be achieved by simply redistributing insufficient existing state aid among jurisdictions.

Cost shifting and unfunded mandates.

VML opposes the imposition of new federal or state requirements without the funding to

1 pay them. In the case of state mandates, as
2 the state reduces its funding and assistance
3 to localities, it must ease or eliminate
4 requirements it is unwilling to support. In
5 the case of federal mandates, the state must
6 at the very least maintain its share of
7 responsibility for program supervision and
8 funding. For example:

- 9
- 10 • funding the administration of the
- 11 FAMIS eligibility and case
- 12 management without state support;
- 13 • paying the cost of federal penalties
- 14 when the state does not meet its
- 15 obligations for human services
- 16 programs, including adequate
- 17 administrative funding, technology,
- 18 training, and technical assistance
- 19 necessary to properly do the job;
- 20 • maintaining state funding the costs
- 21 for federally-mandated and state-
- 22 supervised programs such as
- 23 adoption assistance, and
- 24 • restoring the state funding ratio for
- 25 local welfare administrative costs, in
- 26 which the state pays 80 percent and
- 27 the localities pay 20 percent.

28 **AGING SERVICES**

29 **Community programs.** As alternatives to
30 institutionalized care wherever appropriate,
31 the state should develop Medicaid waivers
32 or otherwise fully fund community-based
33 programs like companion services, respite
34 care, homemaker services, adult group
35 homes and adult day care for the elderly.

36 **Housing.** The state should support policies
37 that increase the affordability and
38 availability of senior housing throughout the
39 commonwealth.

40 **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

41 **Planning for the future of the community**
42 **& facility system.**

43 Any plan for the future of the publicly-
44 funded behavioral health and developmental
45 services system should include adequate
46 state funding for:

- 47 • A community-based, comprehensive
- 48 system of care;
- 49 • Urgent care needs in each
- 50 community, including crisis
- 51 intervention teams (CIT);
- 52 • Comprehensive services and
- 53 supports for persons returning to the
- 54 community from any type of state
- 55 facilities (public safety as well as
- 56 behavioral health), as well as for
- 57 those persons diverted from state
- 58 facilities.
- 59 • Children’s mental health services,
- 60 including community-based early
- 61 interventions and the Mental Health
- 62 Initiative;
- 63 • Medicaid waivers to eliminate
- 64 service waiting lists; and
- 65 • Availability of services for
- 66 consumers seeking voluntary
- 67 treatment services, regardless of their
- 68 ability to pay.

69 Further, VML supports Community Services
70 Boards (CSBs) as the single point-of-entry
71 into the publicly-funded system of care and
72 as a choice for services to individuals and
73 families.

74 Further, any restructuring plan should assure
75 the following:

- 76 • Local flexibility in planning and service
- 77 provision, particularly for local-only
- 78 funds;
- 79 • No changes in the local match that
- 80 would increase the burden on local taxes
- 81 and budgets;
- 82 • Meaningful consultation with local
- 83 officials and community services boards
- 84 regarding strategies and funding
- 85 proposals for publicly-funded services;
- 86
- 87
- 88
- 89
- 90

- 1 • Sufficient time and opportunity for
2 public comment on any legislative
3 proposals;
- 4 • Strategies to overcome past de-
5 institutionalization errors, particularly
6 the shifting of the burden of care to
7 communities;
- 8 • Strategies to discourage the
9 concentration of consumers in facility
10 communities and in urban centers; and
- 11 • State facilities are not so drastically
12 reduced in size and scope that the
13 potential for inpatient care is effectively
14 eliminated.

15
16 **Part C early intervention.** VML urges the
17 General Assembly to assure full state
18 funding for infants and toddlers eligible for
19 therapeutic services under Part C of IDEA to
20 improve their school readiness and quality
21 of life.

22
23 **Behavioral health services for youth**
24 **Funding.** The state should build upon its
25 funding and seek federal-state funded
26 waivers to provide behavioral health
27 services, in particular, prevention services
28 for youth. VML supports greater state
29 funding to the Mental Health Initiative and
30 other community-based initiatives to
31 diagnose and serve children with behavioral
32 health needs early, to prevent more complex,
33 costly, and restrictive interventions from
34 CSA or the juvenile justice system.

35
36 **Treatment beds.** The state has greatly
37 decreased state facility beds and state-
38 funded services for children, including those
39 with long-term or hard-to-treat conditions,
40 and those in the state and local juvenile
41 detention system. VML urges the state to
42 continue its support of the Commonwealth
43 Center for Children and Adolescents as a
44 part of the array of behavioral health
45 services, and to fund treatment beds for
46 those committed to the juvenile justice

47 system. Further, the state should fund
48 supportive services for children leaving
49 treatment and their families to further
50 stabilize their living situations and allow for
51 recovery.

52
53 **Service capacity.** VML encourages the
54 state to establish a children’s behavioral
55 health workforce development initiative to
56 build service capacity throughout the state.

57
58 **Medicaid accountability and quality of**
59 **care.** The league encourages adequate state
60 oversight of, and accountability for
61 community-level services funded by
62 Medicaid, whether those services are
63 furnished through private or public
64 providers.

65
66 **Substance abuse and behavioral health**
67 **needs in the justice system.** VML supports
68 the creation of state-funded programs and
69 facilities, and funding of current programs,
70 such as drug courts and day reporting
71 centers, to divert individuals with mental
72 illness from jails and juvenile detention into
73 more appropriate community-based or in-
74 patient treatment programs. VML opposes
75 changes in state funding formulae to turn
76 local and regional jails into in-patient
77 behavioral health treatment centers.

78
79 **Needs of military veterans and families**
80 Given the number of active military,
81 veterans, and military families living in
82 Virginia, it is clear that behavioral health
83 needs of soldiers returning home with PTSD
84 and their families must be swiftly and
85 adequately addressed. VML urges the
86 federal government to increase funding and
87 access to behavioral health and addiction
88 treatment services for active members of the
89 military (including National Guard and
90 Reserves), returning veterans, and their
91 family members.

92

1 **CHILDREN’S SERVICES ACT**
2 In the last 20+ years Virginia has
3 implemented just half of the CSA program.
4 When the CSA was developed in the early
5 1990s, the plan called for comprehensive
6 prevention programs for at risk youth and
7 families. Unless and until the state commits
8 to developing and funding services that
9 address the roots of issues that bring
10 children and families into CSA, the CSA
11 program will continue as an expensive
12 “catch-up” approach to addressing the
13 complex needs of children and families.
14
15 **A realistic partnership.** The
16 Commonwealth should establish a statutory
17 provision for operation of this state-local
18 partnership that appropriately reflects the
19 shared responsibilities, the need for
20 sufficient “rules and tools”, and recognizes
21 the practical reality that correcting policy
22 and procedural errors may take substantial
23 time and resources.
24
25 **Administrative funding.** VML supports
26 greater funding from the state to support the
27 program’s substantial administrative
28 requirements carried out at the local level.
29
30 **Base-budget funding.** The costs of CSA
31 should be fully funded in the state’s base
32 budget.
33
34 **Expansion of the mandated population.**
35 VML opposes attempts to expand the CSA
36 mandated population or turn CSA into the
37 children’s mental health program. VML
38 opposes as well any efforts to expand local
39 responsibility for Medicaid match to new
40 categories of individuals, or to require
41 localities to pay the educational costs for
42 children placed in residential treatment
43 outside of the local FAPT process.
44
45 **Incentive funding.** The CSA funding
46 formula should include an incentive

47 component that rewards those local
48 governments implementing innovative and
49 cost-effective interventions.
50
51 **State agency policy coordination.** The
52 State Executive Council must ensure that the
53 administrative and policy requirements of
54 the state agencies involved in the CSA are
55 consistent with one another and consistently
56 applied to local governments.
57
58 **Service coordination.** State and local
59 governments should work together to ensure
60 the greatest degree of coordination between
61 Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and CSA
62 service plans.
63
64 **Sum sufficiency.** CSA serves many
65 children who are entitled to sum sufficient
66 services; the state must keep its commitment
67 to fund its share of services costs for this
68 population.
69
70 **Utilization review.** Local governments
71 must maintain the flexibility to develop
72 utilization management processes that are
73 approved by the State Executive Council.
74
75 **FACILITIES FOR ADULTS AND**
76 **YOUTH**
77 **Auxiliary grant program.** The state should
78 assume full responsibility for the cost of the
79 auxiliary grant program for elderly persons
80 and people with disabilities.
81
82 **Licensure and regulation of group homes.**
83 VML urges the state to continue to work
84 with local governments to assure adequate
85 licensure and regulatory requirements are in
86 place to assure community safety and well-
87 being.
88
89 **HOMELESSNESS**
90 VML supports measures to prevent
91 homelessness in Virginia and to assist the
92 chronic homeless, including veterans, in

1 obtaining appropriate rehabilitative and
2 recovery services, job training and support,
3 and affordable and appropriate housing.
4 VML supports measures to remove barriers
5 this population faces in meeting
6 identification and residency requirements for
7 valid state-issued identification cards. VML
8 urges the state to create a housing trust fund
9 and to work with communities to develop
10 and otherwise support housing for this
11 population.

13 JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS

14 **Virginia Juvenile Community Crime**
15 **Control Act (VJCCCA).** The Virginia
16 Municipal League urges the General
17 Assembly to restore the 71 percent funding
18 reduction to the Virginia Juvenile
19 Community Crime Control Act (VJCCCA)
20 program and to support an equitable and
21 stable funding allocation process for the
22 program.

24 The VJCCCA directs localities, in
25 cooperation with judges, to implement
26 programs that divert youth from state or
27 local confinement or help ensure the success
28 of those re-entering the community from
29 confinement. Every city and county
30 participates in the program.

32 VJCCCA gives judges the ability to order
33 first-time and less serious offenders to
34 services such as electronic monitoring,
35 intensive counseling, and group homes.
36 Such appropriate services reduce more
37 costly and less suitable placements in local
38 secure detention or state correctional
39 facilities. It also effectively serves youth
40 that are part of the non-mandated population
41 under the Children’s Services Act.

43 **System transformation.** VML supports
44 juvenile justice system transformation that:

- 45 • Gives juvenile detention centers
46 flexibility, not mandates, to contract

47 with the state to house lower-risk
48 offenders from state facilities;

- 49 • Pays juvenile detention facilities the
50 actual costs for housing and serving
51 lower-risk offenders from the state;
52 and
- 53 • Allows the Department to reinvest
54 savings or otherwise provides
55 sufficient, stable funding to
56 implement a treatment continuum
57 with more service and treatment
58 options, and supports to ensure better
59 outcomes and lower recidivism.

61 SOCIAL SERVICES

62 **Child and family services program**
63 **improvement plan.** The state must fund the
64 technology and systems to improve the
65 quality of all casework activities related to
66 child welfare services (prevention of child
67 abuse/neglect; prevention foster care, foster
68 care and adoption)

70 **Child care.** Affordable, high-quality child
71 care is crucial to parents in the Temporary
72 Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
73 program and to low-income parents whose
74 wages simply cannot cover child care costs.
75 The state must help fund child care costs to
76 help these families. The state should
77 consider ways to ensure safe, affordable
78 child care, such as grants for nonprofit or
79 public organizations offering child care, and
80 employer incentives to provide child care
81 centers or other assistance for their
82 employees.

84 **Healthy families.** VML supports expanded
85 use of state general funds for the Healthy
86 Families program, a voluntary program that
87 offers parental education, support, and
88 assistance to help prevent the need for more
89 costly human services and public safety
90 programs in the future.

1 **Social Services Block Grant.** Virginia uses
2 Title XX-Social Services Block Grant
3 (SSBG) funding for a variety of non-cash-
4 assistance services, including in-home
5 services for the elderly, child and adult
6 abuse investigators, and domestic abuse and
7 family preservation services. Congress has
8 consistently underfunded the SSBG at the
9 levels authorized in the 1996 federal welfare
10 reform law. VML urges Congress to live up
11 to its commitment to fully fund the SSBG.
12 Until the federal budget fully funds SSBG,
13 VML urges the General Assembly to
14 continue to first use any Temporary
15 Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
16 balances to replace SSBG funds.

17 **HEALTH**

18 **Cooperative health budget.** The General
19 Assembly should provide sufficient funding
20 local health departments.
21

22 **Local flexibility.** District health offices
23 should be locally controlled to the maximum
24 extent consistent with protecting public
25 health.

26 **HEALTH CARE REFORM**

27 Expansion of state Medicaid eligibility
28 would increase the workload and costs for
29 local departments of social services, which
30 perform eligibility determination and
31 redetermination on behalf of the state. Any
32 expansion of the caseload must be
33 accompanied by sufficient state funding for
34 staffing and technology to properly do the
35 job. VML supports expansion of Medicaid
36 through the federal Affordable Care Act
37
38
39

40 **II. EDUCATION**

41 The Virginia Municipal League supports the
42 goal of ensuring quality, well-funded and
43 effective teaching in every classroom in the
44 Commonwealth. Localities have greatly
45 exceeded their responsibilities for K-12
46 education funding. It is essential for the state

47 to meet fully its responsibilities to fund
48 education.

49 **VISION**

50 A strong public education system is the
51 pillar of American society and a passport to
52 the future. Our country cannot be strong
53 without an excellent education system that
54 students leave armed with the critical
55 thinking skills that will enable them to be
56 productive citizens. A solid foundation of
57 learning is essential for our communities,
58 state, and country. A strong public school
59 system is essential to economic development
60 and prosperity.
61

62 A strong educational system requires
63 accountability; parental, community and
64 business involvement; and the wise and
65 efficient use of resources. Standards are an
66 essential part of the accountability system,
67 but cannot be measured simply by
68 standardized tests. Students need to learn not
69 only facts and figures, but also those critical
70 learning skills that will enable them to leave
71 high school prepared for either the
72 workplace or higher education.
73

74 Students, parents, administrators and
75 teachers all have roles in the educational
76 system and have to be part of that
77 accountability system. Parents should be
78 involved with their children's education, but
79 family support for parents is essential,
80 particularly in dealing with children with
81 mental, physical, substance abuse or
82 bullying problems. Not all children should
83 or need to prepare to attend college, but
84 students across the economic spectrum
85 should have equitable opportunities to learn.
86

87 A sound education system puts resources
88 where they can be most effective, includes
89 collaboration between school boards and
90 local governing bodies, uses technology
91 effectively, embraces innovation and
92

1 regional opportunities and focuses on early
2 intervention to tackle problems at the
3 earliest time possible.

4
5 **STANDARDS OF QUALITY**

6 The SOQ should be broad enough to include
7 the major components of what is required
8 for a quality educational program.

9
10 The current SOQ are not reflect the cost of a
11 sound public education system. The SOQ
12 are not based on prevailing practices, nor do
13 they reflect the cost of meeting state
14 accountability standards. Because of this
15 disconnect between the accountability
16 standards and the SOQ, the cost that the
17 state recognizes in its funding formulas is
18 too low, and too much of the burden of
19 funding public education falls on local
20 governments.

21
22 The state and local governments should
23 partner to determine the minimum funding
24 levels necessary to sustain high quality
25 services for schools and other local
26 government operations while also
27 addressing capital and maintenance needs.

28
29 VML supports a JLARC or other state study
30 that examines the ways other states fund
31 education and whether the Commonwealth
32 should use a funding strategy that
33 establishes a more realistic base foundation
34 amount per pupil – plus add-on funding to
35 reflect higher costs for educating at-risk,
36 disabled, ESL, and gifted students, etc. as
37 well as funding for capital costs.

38
39 VML supports a study by the Joint
40 Legislative Audit and Review Commission
41 to determine how the SOQ may be revised
42 and adequately funded to meet the
43 requirements contained in the Standards of
44 Learning and Standards of Accreditation.
45 VML also supports implementation of

46 JLARC recommendations to promote 3rd
47 grade reading performance.

48
49 **SOQ FUNDING**

50 VML supports full funding of the state’s
51 share of the actual costs of the SOQ based
52 on prevailing practices, and full funding of
53 the state’s share of categorical educational
54 mandates in areas such as special education,
55 alternative education and gifted education.

56
57 The state should fully recognize and fund
58 the costs of rebenchmarking of the various
59 educational programs including the
60 Standards of Quality, incentive, categorical,
61 and school facilities programs. Changing
62 the process of rebenchmarking to artificially
63 lower recognized costs does not change
64 what it actually costs to provide education.
65 Instead, it simply transfers additional costs
66 to local governments, and ultimately to the
67 local real estate tax base.

68
69 The state must be a reliable funding partner
70 in accordance with the Virginia Constitution
71 and state statutes. The Standards of Quality
72 should recognize resources, including
73 positions, required for a high-quality public
74 education system.

75
76 Funding for the SOQ should include:

- 77
78 1. Establishment of a new, predictable
79 and meaningful source of funding for
80 construction, including funding for
81 new construction, renovation,
82 maintenance and land purchase. The
83 Literary Fund and the Virginia
84 Public School Authority are not
85 sufficient means for the state to help
86 localities pay for capital needs.
87 2. A predictable and reliable source of
88 funding for technology infrastructure
89 and personnel costs.
90 3. Realistic state funding for salary
91 increases for professional and non-

1 professional school employees.
2 Salary increases should be funded
3 for a full year starting July 1, the
4 start of the fiscal year.
5 4. Funding to initiate and continue to
6 enable school systems to address
7 school safety issues.
8 5. Recognition of adequate support
9 costs based on realistic measures of
10 the importance of support positions
11 to achievement on state
12 accountability standards. Current
13 state funding for support positions
14 are not based on prevailing practices
15 or on any scientifically-derived
16 staffing ratios.
17 6. Flexibility where possible in areas
18 such as funding of student health
19 services.
20 7. Support for funding of
21 recommendations made by JLARC
22 to promote reading by grade level by
23 the third grade.
24 8. Development of realistic cost
25 estimates that are based on
26 prevailing practices and not on the
27 availability of state funding.
28 9. Review by JLARC in order that data
29 and information can be provided to
30 the State Board of Education on the
31 cost of meeting the SOQs, SOLs and
32 SOAs.
33 10. Lottery funds that are distributed to
34 localities without a corresponding
35 reduction in direct aid.
36
37 The state should not require any
38 maintenance of local effort other than that
39 associated with the SOQ. A maintenance of
40 effort requirement that is not connected to
41 the SOQ will punish those localities that
42 voluntarily spent beyond the required
43 minimum in an effort to achieve a high
44 quality system of education. Further, it will
45 simply perpetuate the current mismatch in
46 state-local funding for education.

47
48 The General Assembly should recognize
49 that local governments traditionally have
50 funded their share of costs of meeting the
51 SOQ and, in fact, most have funded
52 education beyond their required share in
53 efforts to provide quality education. These
54 higher funding levels have meant that
55 localities have had to raise local taxes and
56 fees and defer spending on other important
57 local priorities including public safety.
58
59 The local composite index (LCI) is a crude
60 and often inaccurate proxy for determining
61 the ability of each locality to pay its share of
62 K-12 expenses as defined by the SOQ. The
63 Commonwealth's education funding
64 formulae (SOQ and LCI) are more sensitive
65 to the state's revenue situation than the
66 educational needs of Virginia's students.
67 VML supports a JLARC or other state study
68 that examines the ways other states fund
69 education and whether the Commonwealth
70 should use a funding strategy that
71 establishes a more realistic base foundation
72 amount per pupil – plus add-on funding to
73 reflect higher costs for educating at-risk,
74 disabled, ESL, and gifted students, etc.
75
76 Because spending increases alone may not
77 produce desired levels of student
78 achievement, the State Board of Education
79 and other responsible bodies are urged to
80 develop measures of results to determine the
81 actual effectiveness of expenditures on
82 education. VML supports the use of school
83 efficiency reviews to help determine ways to
84 ensure that public funds are spent as
85 effectively and efficiently as possible.
86
87 VML believes that the methodology for
88 costing the SOQ does not take into account
89 the differences in costs in the state's various
90 regions, nor does it adequately address
91 unique local conditions such as small, large,
92 declining, or diverse student populations.

1 First, the methodology artificially lowers the
2 state average salary by using the “L-
3 estimator” instead of average salary figures.
4 Second, the L-estimator is based on dated
5 information that does not reflect current
6 salary levels. Third, the methodology uses
7 an artificially low limit on the number of
8 professionals per 1,000 pupils for which
9 state aid is given. Fourth, the methodology
10 does not address the differences in providing
11 education to students with special needs or
12 the heavy additional cost of educating
13 English as Second Language students. The
14 add-on funding for at-risk students is a start
15 toward meeting unique local circumstances
16 and should be increased.

17
18 The first priority for the use of a state
19 surplus should be the funding of mandated
20 educational programs.

21
22 Disparity should not be addressed by simply
23 redistributing existing state aid among
24 jurisdictions.

25 26 **LOCAL AUTONOMY**

27 Because public education should be as close
28 as possible to the people, local school
29 decisions cannot and should not be made by
30 the state. Local schools boards should be
31 responsible for the direct supervision and
32 management of local schools.

33
34 The state should not take any actions that
35 limit or reduce authority of local school
36 boards and local governing bodies to finance
37 and manage local schools. Local school
38 boards should retain the responsibility for
39 approving applications for charter schools.
40 Otherwise, decisions that affect the funding
41 of public schools potentially could be made
42 by a statewide, appointed body that has no
43 direct connection to the council or board of
44 supervisors.

45
46

47 **ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION**

48 Traditional approaches to discipline—long-
49 term suspensions and expulsions—transfer
50 the problems of the student from the school
51 division to the general government. There
52 should be school alternatives to the normal
53 school environment for students who do not
54 behave appropriately. The state should
55 develop and fund alternatives for students
56 suspended and expelled from school, such as
57 programs designed to encourage obtainment
58 of GEDs, career education, job skills, self-
59 control training and drug and substance
60 prevention. Finally, there is little effective
61 enforcement of truancy laws for students
62 who are over 16 years of age. Some of these
63 students have full time jobs and school
64 divisions have difficulty in locating them.
65 VML encourages the development of
66 initiatives to better enable schools to track
67 these older students, or otherwise determine
68 if changes are needed to truancy laws.

69 70 **EARLY CHILDHOOD** 71 **DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION**

72 Research has shown that the early childhood
73 years (from infancy to age five) are critical
74 years for brain development. These early
75 years are also critical for establishing
76 healthy lifestyles – eating nutritious foods,
77 engaging in activities and exercise (i.e.,
78 playing), and learning basic health and
79 safety practices.

80
81 Children who are regularly read to and gain
82 basic language skills; who participate in
83 healthy activities and learning experiences;
84 and who learn basic social skills, are more
85 likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn.
86 They are also more likely to read at grade
87 level by the third grade. This early progress
88 can lead to continued success in school and
89 ultimately in the workforce.

90
91 VML supports state and local policies and
92 initiatives that spotlight and encourage

1 greater early learning opportunities for
2 children, along with access to information
3 and resources that will help parents and
4 caregivers give young children the greatest
5 chances to learn and grow in healthy ways.
6 This will ensure a better economic future for
7 families and communities.

8
9 VML supports increased state funding for
10 pre-kindergarten students to ensure that all
11 children entering the public system have the
12 social and intellectual skills necessary to be
13 successful students.

14
15 **HIGHER EDUCATION**
16 Virginia’s colleges and universities serve as
17 engines of economic growth, cultural
18 enrichment, and intellectual development for
19 communities across the commonwealth.
20 The decline in state support for institutions
21 of higher education and the state’s
22 unwillingness to invest in these institutions
23 endangers the economic health of the
24 commonwealth and its cities, towns, and
25 counties.

26 In addition to ensuring a stronger and more
27 diversified economic base, a healthy and
28 vibrant higher education sector, which
29 includes two-year as well as four-year
30 institutions, supplies our communities with
31 an educated and well-trained workforce that
32 attracts new businesses and allows existing
33 businesses to compete effectively in an

34 increasingly competitive global economy.
35 Further, beneficiaries of higher education
36 tend to earn higher incomes, thus expanding
37 the revenue stream to the state, and thereby
38 ensuring the continued provision of quality
39 services for its citizens. Finally, the
40 involvement of institutions, their faculty,
41 and their students in communities across the
42 commonwealth and the expanded cultural
43 opportunities these institutions offer
44 communities enhances the quality of life for
45 all Virginians.

46
47 Currently, community colleges are required
48 to offer reduced tuition for high school
49 students. Local schools, however, are
50 required to make up the difference in tuition.
51 This clearly is an unfunded mandate. The
52 state should find other resources within its
53 higher education budget to pay for the
54 tuition for these students.

55
56 **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**
57 VML supports innovative approaches to
58 ensure that training and certification
59 programs are widely available to high school
60 students, GED candidates, returning
61 veterans, and other residents, particularly
62 those representing underserved
63 populations. Such programs are vital to
64 prepare Virginians for careers vital to
65 Virginia’s economic prosperity.