



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

2021 Human Development & Education Policy Statement

1 **I. Human Development**

2
3 The strength of our communities determines the strength of our democracy. emotional, social, and economic
4 poverty weakens the fabric of our society and threatens our democracy. Policy leaders must ensure access to
5 opportunities and invest the proper resources necessary for all children to grow up in nurturing surroundings,
6 and to reconnect and strengthen the bonds of individuals and institutions in communities so that they thrive
7 and favorably compete in the global economy.

8 9 **A Platform for Children & Families**

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

- 13 • **Opportunities to learn and grow:** Family literacy programs, quality out-of-school time programs
14 and early childhood programs.
- 15 • **Safe neighborhoods to call home:** Sufficient state support for local law enforcement, juvenile
16 justice, and prisoner re-entry programs.
- 17 • **Healthy lifestyles & environment:** Improving access to healthy foods, physical activity and
18 recreation programs.
- 19 • **Financially fit families:** Workforce development, curbing predatory lenders, and increasing access to
20 low-cost bank accounts and mainstream banking and financial services.

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22 VML supports approaches (such as the Virginia Grocery Incentive Fund as one example) to provide financial
23 and technical support for businesses to help expand and ensure greater access to healthy food for residents of
24 the state.

25 26 **Intergovernmental Issues & Funding**

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

30 31 **A working partnership.**

- 32 • The federal and state governments should allow local governments maximum flexibility in
33 developing and funding public/private partnerships to address human service needs.
- 34 • Local government must be a partner with the state and federal government in the process of
35 developing regulations, policies, and funding allocation methods.
- 36 • The State should require interagency review of regulations to reconcile existing conflicts and to avoid
37 duplication or conflict among agencies.

- 38 • The State should share data with communities and build a comprehensive human services data base
39 to promote greater planning coordination and evaluation of services.

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

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45 **Cost shifting and unfunded mandates.** VML opposes the imposition of new federal or state requirements
46 without the funding to pay for them. In the case of state mandates, as the state reduces its funding and
47 assistance to localities, it must ease or eliminate requirements it is unwilling to support. In the case of federal
48 mandates, the state must at the very least maintain its share of responsibility for program supervision and
49 funding. For example:

- 50 • Funding the administration of the FAMIS eligibility and case management.
51 • Paying the cost of federal penalties when the state does not meet its obligations for human services
52 programs, including adequate administrative funding, technology, training, and technical assistance
53 necessary to properly do the job.
54 • Maintaining state funding for the costs for federally mandated and state-supervised programs such as
55 adoption assistance.
56 • Restoring the state funding ratio for local welfare administrative costs, in which the state pays 80
57 percent, and the localities pay 20 percent.

58 59 **Aging Services**

60 **Community programs.** As alternatives to institutionalized care wherever appropriate, the state should
61 develop Medicaid waivers or otherwise fully fund community-based programs like companion services,
62 respite care, homemaker services, adult group homes and adult day care for the elderly.

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64 **Housing.** The state should support policies that increase the affordability and availability of senior housing
65 throughout the Commonwealth.

66 67 **Opioids, Heroin, Synthetic Drugs**

68 VML supports an intergovernmental and interdisciplinary partnership to address the epidemic of opioid and
69 heroin overdoses in Virginia. Further, VML urges the federal government to actively address the public
70 health threats posed by any emerging synthetic drugs that pose a similar addiction/overdose threat.

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72 VML supports the Commonwealth's policy framework that targets the following:

- 73 1) Prevention – reduction in the supply of legal opiates, and tracking and reduction of the supply of
74 illegal opiates such as heroin and synthetic substances.
75 2) Harm reduction – active intervention until treatment is available and accepted.
76 3) Treatment – for those who are addicted, and support/recovery resources for family members of
77 people in treatment.
78 4) Culture change – discourage use/overuse of legal opioids, change pain management expectations, and
79 remove stigma regarding addiction treatment and recovery.

80 81 **Behavioral Health**

82 **Planning for the future of the community & facility system.** Any plan for the publicly funded behavioral
83 health and developmental services system should include adequate state funding for:

- 84 • A community-based, comprehensive system of care.
85 • Crisis intervention teams and centers to ensure that adults and children experiencing a mental health
86 crisis are able to obtain timely evaluation and assistance as close to their home community as
87 possible.

- 88 • A robust statewide system of alternative transportation options to help individuals in crisis get to
89 evaluation services and treatment with the goal of eliminating the reliance on local law enforcement
90 for extended transportation and custody services.
- 91 • Accessibility to inpatient beds and crisis services on a regional basis, potentially through public-
92 private partnerships, to decrease the need for long-distance transports for critical care.
- 93 • Comprehensive services and supports for people returning to the community from any type of state
94 facilities (public safety as well as behavioral health), as well as for people diverted from state
95 facilities.
- 96 • Children’s mental health services, including community-based early interventions and the Mental
97 Health Initiative.
- 98 • Medicaid waivers to eliminate service waiting lists.
- 99 • Availability of services for consumers voluntarily seeking treatment services, regardless of their
100 ability to pay.

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

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105 Any restructuring plan should assure the following:

- 106 • Local flexibility in planning and service provision, particularly for local-only funds.
- 107 • No changes in the local match that would increase the burden on local taxes and budgets.
- 108 • Meaningful consultation with local officials and community services boards regarding strategies and
109 funding proposals for publicly funded services.
- 110 • Sufficient time and opportunity for public comment on any legislative proposals.
- 111 • Strategies to overcome past de-institutionalization errors, particularly the shifting of the burden of
112 care to communities.
- 113 • Strategies to discourage the concentration of consumers in facility communities and in urban centers.
- 114 • State facilities are not so drastically reduced in size and scope that the potential for inpatient care is
115 effectively eliminated.

116
117 **Part C early intervention.** VML urges the General Assembly to assure full state funding for infants and
118 toddlers eligible for therapeutic services under Part C of IDEA to improve their school readiness and quality
119 of life.

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121 **Behavioral health services for youth funding.** The state should build upon its funding and seek federal-
122 state funded waivers to provide behavioral health services, in particular, prevention services for youth. VML
123 supports greater state funding to the Mental Health Initiative and other community-based initiatives to
124 diagnose and serve children with behavioral health needs early, to prevent more complex, costly, and
125 restrictive interventions.

126
127 **Treatment beds.** The state has greatly decreased state facility beds and state-funded services for children,
128 including those with long-term or hard-to-treat conditions, and those in the state and local juvenile detention
129 system. VML urges the state to continue its support of the Commonwealth Center for Children and
130 Adolescents as a part of the array of behavioral health services, and to fund treatment beds for those
131 committed to the juvenile justice system. Further, the state should fund supportive services for children
132 leaving treatment and their families to further stabilize their living situations and allow for recovery.

133
134 **Service capacity.** VML encourages the state to establish a children’s behavioral health workforce
135 development initiative to build service capacity throughout the state.

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137 **Medicaid accountability and quality of care.** The league encourages adequate state oversight of, and
138 accountability for, community-level services funded by Medicaid, whether those services are furnished
139 through private or public providers.

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141 **Behavioral health standards for jails.** The 2019 General Assembly approved legislation directing the
142 Board of Corrections to draft standards to address health and behavioral health service needs in local and
143 regional jails, as well as discharge planning for inmates with behavioral health needs. If new health and
144 behavioral health standards create a fiscal impact for communities and their jails, the state must find a way to
145 alleviate those new costs. This could include creating a health/behavioral health add-on to state per diem
146 payments or otherwise funding new positions and associated costs through the Compensation Board for
147 newly required services.

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149 **Substance abuse and behavioral health needs in the justice system.** VML supports the creation of state-
150 funded programs and facilities, and funding of current programs, such as drug courts and day reporting
151 centers, to divert individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders from jails and juvenile detention
152 into more appropriate community-based or in-patient treatment programs. VML opposes changes in state
153 funding formulae to turn local and regional jails into in-patient behavioral health treatment centers.

154
155 **Needs of military veterans and families.** Given the number of active military members, veterans, and
156 military families living in Virginia, it is clear that behavioral health needs of soldiers returning home with
157 PTSD and their families must be swiftly and adequately addressed. VML urges the federal government to
158 increase funding and access to behavioral health and addiction treatment services for active members of the
159 military (including National Guard and Reserves), returning veterans, and their family members.

160
161 **Children’s Services Act.** When the CSA was developed in the early 1990s, the plan called for
162 comprehensive prevention programs for at risk youth and families. Unless and until the state commits to
163 developing and funding services that address the roots of issues that bring children and families into CSA,
164 the CSA program will continue as an expensive “catch-up” approach to addressing the complex needs of
165 children and families.

166
167 **A realistic partnership.** The Commonwealth should establish a statutory provision for operation of this
168 state-local partnership that appropriately reflects the shared responsibilities, the need for sufficient “rules and
169 tools,” and recognizes the practical reality that correcting policy and procedural errors may take substantial
170 time and resources.

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172 **Administrative funding.** VML supports greater funding from the state to support the program’s substantial
173 administrative requirements carried out at the local level.

174
175 **Base-budget funding.** The costs of CSA should be fully funded in the state’s base budget.

176
177 **Expansion of the mandated population.** VML opposes attempts to expand the CSA mandated population
178 or turn CSA into the children’s mental health program. VML also opposes efforts to expand local
179 responsibility for Medicaid match to new categories of individuals, or to require localities to pay the
180 educational costs for children placed in residential treatment outside of the local FAPT process.

181
182 **Incentive funding.** The CSA funding formula should include an incentive component that rewards those
183 local governments implementing innovative and cost-effective interventions.

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185 **State agency policy coordination.** The State Executive Council must ensure that the administrative and
186 policy requirements of the state agencies involved in the CSA are consistent with one another and
187 consistently applied to local governments.

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Service coordination. State and local governments should work together to ensure the greatest degree of coordination between Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and CSA service plans.

Sum sufficiency. CSA serves many children who are entitled to sum sufficient services; the state must keep its commitment to fund its share of services costs for this population.

Utilization review. Local governments must maintain the flexibility to develop utilization management processes that are approved by the State Executive Council.

Rate setting. VML supports state rate setting for special education private day and residential programs. VML supports state contracts that localities may use to procure such services for children covered by CSA.

Facilities for Adults and Youth

Auxiliary grant program. The state should assume full responsibility for the cost of the auxiliary grant program for elderly persons and people with disabilities.

Licensure and regulation of group homes. VML urges the state to continue to work with local governments to assure adequate licensure and regulatory requirements are in place to assure community safety and well-being.

Homelessness

VML supports measures to prevent homelessness in Virginia and to assist the chronic homeless, including veterans, in obtaining appropriate rehabilitative and recovery services, job training and support, and affordable and appropriate housing. VML supports measures to remove barriers this population faces in meeting identification and residency requirements for valid state-issued identification cards. VML urges further state support for the housing trust fund to help communities develop and support housing for this population.

Juvenile Justice Programs

Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act (VJCCCA). The Virginia Municipal League urges the General Assembly to restore the 71 percent funding reduction taken in the early 2000s to the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act (VJCCCA) program, and to support an equitable and stable funding allocation process for the program.

The VJCCCA directs localities, in cooperation with judges, court-services unit directors, and Community Policy and Management Teams under the Children’s Services Act to implement programs that divert youth from state or local confinement or help ensure the success of those re-entering the community from confinement. Every city and county participate in the program.

VJCCCA gives judges the ability to order first-time and less serious offenders to services such as electronic monitoring, intensive individual or family counseling, and group homes. Such appropriate services reduce costlier and less suitable placements in local secure detention or state correctional facilities. It also effectively serves non-mandated youth under the Children’s Services Act.

VML opposes any effort to divert existing VJCCCA funds for other purposes; any new populations proposed for services under this program must be accompanied by additional state funding.

System transformation. VML supports juvenile justice system transformation that:

- Gives juvenile detention centers flexibility, not mandates, to contract with the state to house lower-risk offenders from state facilities.

- Pays juvenile detention facilities the actual costs for housing and serving lower-risk offenders from the state.
- Allows the Department to reinvest savings or otherwise provides sufficient, stable funding to implement a treatment continuum with more service and treatment options and supports to ensure better outcomes and lower recidivism.

Social Services

Family First Prevention Services Act. Approved by Congress in 2018, the FFPS Act is the first major revision of the title IV-E foster care program since the early 1980s. Changes in the program's requirements and allowable services will require cooperation between the state, local governments, and private service providers to ensure successful implementation. VML supports this cooperative effort but opposes any proposal to impose new local match requirements to this program.

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

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

Healthy families. VML supports expanded use of state general funds for the Healthy Families program, a voluntary program that offers parental education, support, and assistance to help families succeed and prevent the need for costlier interventions.

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

Parks & Recreation

Recreational programs. Local parks and recreation departments offer a variety of affordable activities and programs for children, teenagers, and adults. These programs abide by local health, safety, and risk-management requirements and are ultimately accountable to the local governing body of a city, town, or county. Efforts to categorize these programs as child care are inappropriate, and such recreation programs should not be subject to duplicative state agency regulation and oversight.

Health

Cooperative health budget. The General Assembly should provide sufficient funding to local health departments.

Local flexibility. District health offices should be locally controlled to the maximum extent consistent with protecting public health.

Health Care Reform

VML supports continued state funding for Medicaid eligibility determination services.

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Imposing work requirements on certain Medicaid recipients will also increase workload on local social services staff. The state must provide sufficient state funding and technical assistance for local social services staff who will work with this population.

Human Trafficking

VML supports the state’s efforts to address human trafficking, including the appointment of a sex trafficking response coordinator at the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the proposed development of much-needed public outreach, education, and treatment services. Outreach efforts and avenues for reporting trafficking must address language barriers for those reporting and those seeking rescue from trafficking. Since human trafficking also includes labor trafficking and affects a wide range of ages, all types of trafficking situations should ultimately be addressed in Virginia’s response plan.

II. Education

The Virginia Municipal League supports the goal of ensuring quality, well-funded and effective teaching in every classroom in the Commonwealth. Localities have greatly exceeded their responsibilities for K-12 education funding. It is essential for the state to meet fully its responsibilities to fund education.

Vision

A strong public education system is the pillar of American society and a passport to the future. Our country cannot be strong without an excellent education system that prepares students for the future with the critical thinking skills that will enable them to be productive citizens. A solid foundation of learning is essential for our communities, state, and country. A strong public school system is essential to economic development and prosperity.

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

Students, parents, school administrators and teachers all have roles in the educational system and have to be part of that accountability system. Parents should be involved with their children’s education, but support for parents is essential, particularly for those whose children have behavioral health issues, physical disabilities, substance abuse disorders or bullying problems.

Not all children should or need to prepare to attend college, but students across the economic spectrum should have equitable opportunities to learn.

A sound education system puts resources where they can be most effective, includes collaboration between school boards and local governing bodies, uses technology effectively, embraces innovation and regional opportunities and focuses on early intervention to tackle problems at the earliest time possible.

Standards of Quality

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

The current SOQ do not reflect the cost of a sound public education system. The SOQ are not based on prevailing practices, nor do they reflect the cost of meeting state accountability standards. Because of this

340 disconnect between the accountability standards and the SOQ, the cost that the state recognizes in its funding
341 formulas is too low, and too much of the burden of funding public education falls on local governments.

342
343 The state and local governments should partner to determine the minimum funding levels necessary to
344 sustain high quality services for schools and other local government operations while also addressing capital
345 and maintenance needs.

346
347 VML supports a JLARC or other state study that examines the ways other states fund education and whether
348 the Commonwealth should use a funding strategy that establishes a more realistic base foundation amount
349 per pupil – plus add-on funding to reflect higher costs for educating at-risk, disabled, ESL, and gifted
350 students, etc., as well as funding for capital costs.

351
352 VML supports a study by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to determine how the SOQ
353 may be revised and adequately funded to meet the requirements contained in the Standards of Learning and
354 Standards of Accreditation. VML also supports implementation of JLARC recommendations to promote
355 third grade reading performance.

356 **SOQ Funding**

357 VML supports full funding of the state’s share of the actual costs of the SOQ based on prevailing practices,
358 and full funding of the state’s share of categorical educational mandates in areas such as special education,
359 alternative education, and gifted education.

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361 The state should fully recognize and fund the costs of rebenchmarking of the various educational programs
362 including the Standards of Quality, incentive, categorical, and school facilities programs. Changing the
363 process of rebenchmarking to artificially lower recognized costs does not change what it actually costs to
364 provide education. Instead, it simply transfers additional costs to local governments, and ultimately to the
365 local real estate tax base.

366
367 The state must be a reliable funding partner in accordance with the Virginia Constitution and state statutes.
368 The Standards of Quality should recognize resources, including positions, required for a high-quality public
369 education system.

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372 Funding for the SOQ should include:

- 373 1. Establishment of a new, predictable and meaningful source of funding for construction, including
374 funding for new construction, renovation, maintenance and land purchase. The Literary Fund and the
375 Virginia Public School Authority are not sufficient means for the state to help localities pay for
376 capital needs. Options could include creating a two-year pilot program of competitive grants using
377 funds from the Virginia Public Building Authority to offset new construction or renovation costs for
378 publicly owned and operated K-12 schools in fiscally stressed communities as defined by the
379 Virginia Commission on Local Government.
- 380 2. A predictable and reliable source of funding for technology infrastructure and personnel costs.
- 381 3. Realistic state funding for salary increases for professional and non-professional school employees.
382 Salary increases should be funded for a full year starting July 1, the start of the fiscal year.
- 383 4. State funding to meet the goal of the Commonwealth (VA Code §22.1-289.1) that teacher
384 compensation be competitive; at a minimum, at or above national average teacher compensation,
385 provided that the true costs of meeting the SOQ are funded by the state.
- 386 5. Funding to initiate and continue to enable school systems to address school safety issues.
- 387 6. Recognition of adequate support costs based on realistic measures of the importance of support
388 positions to achievement on state accountability standards. Current state funding for support positions
389 is not based on prevailing practices or on any scientifically-derived staffing ratios.
- 390 7. Flexibility where possible in areas such as funding of student health services.

- 391 8. Support for funding of recommendations made by JLARC to promote reading by grade level by the
392 third grade.
- 393 9. Development of realistic cost estimates that are based on prevailing practices and not on the
394 availability of state funding.
- 395 10. Review by JLARC in order that data and information can be provided to the State Board of Education
396 on the cost of meeting the SOQ, SOLs and SOAs.
- 397 11. Lottery funds that are distributed to localities without a corresponding reduction in direct aid.
398

399 The state should not require any maintenance of local effort other than that associated with the SOQ. A
400 maintenance of effort requirement that is not connected to the SOQ will punish those localities that
401 voluntarily spent beyond the required minimum in an effort to achieve a high- quality system of education.
402 Further, it will simply perpetuate the current mismatch in state-local funding for education.
403

404 The General Assembly should recognize that local governments traditionally have funded their share of costs
405 of meeting the SOQ and, in fact, most have funded education beyond their required share in efforts to
406 provide quality education. These higher funding levels have meant that localities have had to raise local taxes
407 and fees and defer spending on other important local priorities including public safety.
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409 The local composite index (LCI) is a crude and often inaccurate proxy for determining the ability of each
410 locality to pay its share of K-12 expenses as defined by the SOQ. The Commonwealth's education funding
411 formulae (SOQ and LCI) are more sensitive to the state's revenue situation than the educational needs of
412 Virginia's students. VML supports a JLARC or other state study that examines the ways other states fund
413 education and whether the Commonwealth should use a funding strategy that establishes a more realistic
414 base foundation amount per pupil – plus add-on funding to reflect higher costs for educating at-risk,
415 disabled, ESL, and gifted students, etc.
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417 Because spending increases alone may not produce desired levels of student achievement, the State Board of
418 Education and other responsible bodies are urged to develop measures of results to determine the actual
419 effectiveness of expenditures on education. VML supports the use of school efficiency reviews to help
420 determine ways to ensure that public funds are spent as effectively and efficiently as possible.
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422 VML believes that the methodology for costing the SOQ does not consider the differences in costs in the
423 state's various regions, nor does it adequately address unique local conditions such as small, large, declining,
424 or diverse student populations.
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- 426 1) The methodology artificially lowers the state average salary by using the "L-estimator" instead of
427 average salary figures.
- 428 2) The L-estimator is based on dated information that does not reflect current salary levels.
- 429 3) The methodology uses an artificially low limit on the number of professionals per 1,000 pupils for
430 which state aid is given.
- 431 4) The methodology does not address the differences in providing education to students with special
432 needs or the heavy additional cost of educating English as Second Language students. The add-on
433 funding for at-risk students is a start toward meeting unique local circumstances and should be
434 increased.
435

436 The first priority for the use of a state surplus should be the funding of mandated educational programs.
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438 Disparity should not be addressed by simply redistributing existing state aid among jurisdictions.
439

440 **Local Autonomy**

441 Because public education should be as close as possible to the people, local school decisions cannot and
442 should not be made by the state. Local school boards should be responsible for the direct supervision and
443 management of local schools.

444
445 The state should not take any actions that limit or reduce authority of local school boards and local governing
446 bodies to finance and manage local schools. Local school boards should retain the responsibility for
447 approving applications for charter schools. Otherwise, decisions that affect the funding of public schools
448 potentially could be made by a statewide, appointed body that has no direct connection to the council or
449 board of supervisors.

450
451 **Alternative Education**

452 Traditional approaches to discipline—long-term suspensions and expulsions—transfer the problems of the
453 student from the school division to the general government. There should continue to be school alternatives
454 to the normal school environment for students who do not behave appropriately. The state should develop
455 and fund alternatives, including workforce development grants, for students suspended and expelled from
456 school, such as programs designed to encourage obtainment of GEDs, career education, job skills, self-
457 control training and drug and substance prevention. Finally, there is little effective enforcement of truancy
458 laws for students who are over 16 years of age. Some of these students have full time jobs and school
459 divisions have difficulty in locating them. VML encourages the development of initiatives to better enable
460 schools to track these older students, or otherwise determine if changes are needed to truancy laws.

461
462 **Early childhood development & education**

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

466
467 Children who are regularly read to and gain basic language skills, who participate in healthy activities and
468 learning experiences, and who learn basic social skills are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn.
469 They are also more likely to read at grade level by the third grade. This early progress can lead to continued
470 success in school and ultimately in the workforce.

471
472 VML supports state and local policies and initiatives that spotlight and encourage greater early learning
473 opportunities for children, along with access to information and resources that will help parents and
474 caregivers give young children the greatest chances to learn and grow in healthy ways. This will ensure a
475 better economic future for families and communities.

476
477 VML supports increased state funding for pre-kindergarten students to ensure that all children entering the
478 public system have the social and intellectual skills necessary to be successful students.

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480 **Higher Education**

481 Currently, community colleges are required to offer reduced tuition for high school students. Local schools,
482 however, are required to make up the difference in tuition. This clearly is an unfunded mandate. The state
483 should find other resources within its higher education budget to pay for the tuition for these students.

484
485 **Workforce Development**

486 VML supports innovative approaches, including creation of satellite campuses, to ensure that training and
487 certification programs are widely available to high school students, GED candidates, returning veterans, and
488 other residents, particularly those representing underserved and at-risk populations. Such programs are vital
489 to prepare Virginians for careers important to Virginia's economic prosperity.