



Fund Our Schools Statement on the Governor's Proposed Budget for Special Session

The proposed state budget announced yesterday by Gov. Northam fails to address the educational needs of the 1.3 million students who are returning to learning environments that look very different from the schools they left in March. The proposed two-year budget has very few new revenue-raising mechanisms and removes nearly all of the new pre-K and K-12 budget spending initially passed by the General Assembly in March (around \$490 million dollars). The budget fails to fully tap into our rainy day funds, leaving \$1.07 billion in the revenue reserve fund and the revenue stabilization fund. Further, the budget leaves \$490.5 million in the unappropriated balance. With families and students facing incredible barriers to education and learning right now, **the Fund Our Schools coalition calls on lawmakers to leave no money on the table when they negotiate the budget and to prioritize making substantial new and much-needed investments in schools, including restoring the \$490 million in initially passed pre-K and K-12 support and providing an additional \$600 million in flexible emergency response funding to schools.**

Our schools are already operating under razor-thin budgets. State funding for public education has not been fully restored from cuts made due to the 2008 recession, and the current pandemic and economic crisis have only increased the desperation of students and educators. Since public schools across the Commonwealth closed in March, we have witnessed existing equity gaps grow wider. Without intentional, equity-minded investments in P-12 education now, our students will face long-term repercussions for their academic and professional well-being. While we applaud a proposed increase in the governor's budget for broadband access, an essential service for students learning remotely, students need more comprehensive support to successfully learn from home this fall. Removing the \$490 million in new P-12 budget investments is most harmful to the school divisions with the highest share of students of color and students living in households with low incomes.

This is no time for the status quo. Virginia is experiencing a statewide education emergency. We call on lawmakers to tap into Virginia's reserve funds and unappropriated balance for this budget to restore P-12 investments and to provide an additional \$600 in flexible emergency funding to support school reopening efforts.