FORUM TOPIC REQUEST

Each Board Member may request two forum topics per meeting; use this form for one topic.

TOPIC: Creation of a School Board Legislative Committee

TIME SENSITIVE: ☒ Yes ☐ No

DESIRED DATE/TIME FRAME AND REASON:

Should be considered by the Board in April or May to ensure adoption in time for the 2026-2027 reorganization.

BOARD MEMBER NAME:
Kyle McDaniel and Karl Frisch

DATE SUBMITTED:
04/07/2026

FORUM TOPIC DETAILS:

Specify Topic's Relation to Student Achievement Goal, Operational Expectation, or Policy:

For the second year in a row, we have a large funding gap between our proposed budget and what Fairfax County can provide. This is partly due to funding imbalances from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The 2025 Weldon-Cooper Center at UVA study confirmed that Fairfax County receives only 50 cents back from every dollar it sends to Richmond (Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, 2025).

It is also clear that funding challenges will continue in the years to come as the effects of the federal government's changes to public education funding expand and as the high cost of living slows growth. If this continues, Fairfax County will have to raise taxes, cut services, or both, harming our region and the Commonwealth. Such changes will lead to a decline in our public education system as FCPS increasingly struggles to do more with less.

Further compounding this imbalance, analysis from the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) found that FCPS and other public school

divisions in Virginia receive significantly less state funding than school divisions in other states. If Virginia's spending on public education were on par with average investment levels in other states, FCPS would receive an additional $568.7 million every year (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission [JLARC], 2023).
In order to maximize resources for FCPS, we must seek increased partnerships with General Assembly members and create a more targeted strategy for our advocacy work, to both secure more funding and to reinforce to our delegation why the strength of our region affects the strength of the Commonwealth. Most importantly, we must work in partnership with the Board of Supervisors to encourage our delegation to return more dollars to Fairfax County.

To that end, we propose that the School Board eliminate the legislative liaison positions in favor of a Legislative Committee of the whole with a Chair and Vice Chair. This model is identical to the Budget Committee structure. The creation of a Legislative Committee aligns with Pillar B of the Strategic Plan, "Vibrant Home, School and Community Partnerships," by increasing cooperation between School Board Members, Fairfax County supervisors and the Virginia General Assembly (Fairfax County Public Schools, 2023).

The current legislative advocacy process is insufficient to keep pace with the rapidly evolving nature of the Virginia legislative session, especially because it relies on a single point of contact (the State Legislative Liaison). Additionally, aside from adopting the legislative work plan, there is little to no further Board input on legislative positions or priorities during the legislative session.

One of the main benefits of a structural change is that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Legislative Committee would be responsible, jointly, for coordinating the School Board's advocacy efforts throughout the legislative session, and have a mechanism for obtaining School Board input through the committee of the whole structure. It would also increase awareness for all School Board members of the upcoming bills that the General Assembly will take up in the next session. For example, over 3,000 bills were taken up in the 2026 session (Yancey, 2026) alone. There are many competing interests in Richmond in any given legislative session so it is critical that FCPS maintains a strong presence in Richmond, especially as budget decisions are being made.

Being at the forefront of advocacy helps keep education funding at the top of legislators' agendas. We know our delegation wants to bring more funding back to this region, but they need School Board Members to be present in Richmond to show support and solidarity and to communicate to their peers in other jurisdictions that our region's strengths help reinforce theirs. Without our presence, other issues emerge and take precedence, and we lose opportunities to capture funding for FCPS.

To give a sense of how this model would work in practice (and thus illuminate its structural benefits), the pace of work for the Legislative Committee of the whole could involve the following:

1. Work with staff to develop the legislative program and create a list of high-priority and/or high-visibility bills and funding opportunities, along with a plan for engagement with our delegation and discussion in 1-2 work sessions to secure School Board Member feedback;
2. Chair and Vice Chair would make more frequent trips to Richmond during the session to further the Board's advocacy work;
3. Chair and Vice Chair would organize two trips between January and March for other School Board members to assist in advocacy for specific priorities;
4. During session, Chair and Vice Chair would have at least weekly meetings with staff to keep up to date on legislation and Board positions on issues;
5. Chair and Vice Chair create a plan for when urgent issues arise that require immediate Board action
6. Chair and Vice Chair work with staff to create and execute a communications plan to advance our legislative priorities; and
7. Chair and Vice Chair work with staff to coordinate a School Board retreat to providelegislative training that educates Members on best practices for General Assembly advocacy.

Objective of the Topic/Conversation:

To transform the School Board's legislative advocacy program by creating aa Legislative Committee of the whole with a Chair and Vice Chair.

DESIRED OUTCOME:

☐ Forum Discussion Only ☐ Refer to Committee

☐ Superintendent Action / Report ☐ Refer to Work Session

☒ Other:

In alignment with Pillar B of the Strategic Plan, the School Board shall consider the following amendment to its Strategic Governance Manual before the Board's July reorganization for the 2026-2027 school year:

P. 3 - Table of Contents

Board Liaisons (B. 9)

A. School Board Advisory Committees
B. Other Government Entities
~~C. State and Federal Government~~

Board Committees (B. 10)

1. Administration Committee
2. Audit Committee
3. Comprehensive Planning and Development Committee
4. Governance Committee
5. Legislative Committee
6. Public Engagement Committee

P. 42 - Board Liaisons

~~**C. State and Federal Government:**~~

~~Two liaisons (one state and one federal) will guide the development of the Board's legislative program, provide input to the VSBA legislative program in coordination with the Office of Government Relations, advocate with the appropriate legislative and governmental bodies, and report to the Board on current issues.~~

~~Each liaison will serve as a link between the Board and the other entity. The liaison will communicate with the Board about relevant developments and seek Board input as needed.~~

~~Board liaisons will be approved by the Board annually at a July regular Board Meeting.~~

~~In the event of a vacancy during the fiscal year, the Board will appoint a new liaison.~~

P. 47 - Standing Committees Supporting the Board's Work

F. Legislative Committee

I. **Charge:** To work with the Superintendent and the Office of Government Relations to develop the school system's annual legislative program and to continuously advance the School Board's legislative priorities.
II. **Members:** The Legislative Committee is a committee of the whole. One Board member shall be designated as Chair, and one member shall be designated as Vice Chair annually in July.
III. **Staff:** Superintendent or their designee, including the Director of the Office of Government Relations.
IV. **Length of Term:** One year (July to July).