Fairfax County School Board 2027 Federal Priority Positions

Final Action Revisions - Scheduled for 10/08/2026

The Fairfax County School Board (FCSB) supports full and adequate funding for mandated federal programs, along with flexibility for states and localities to meet federal requirements. The FCSB also supports preserving the U.S. Department of Education's role in K12 education, maintaining and improving funding for existing federal education programs, and distributing all Congressionally approved funding. While federal education funding has remained relatively flat in recent years, it has not kept pace with inflation and rising costs, shifting federally mandated program costs to local school divisions.

The following details the 2027 Fairfax County School Board Federal priority positions:

1. **Increase Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Program Funding**
2. **Improve Title I Program Funding**
3. **Protect Access to High-Quality Head Start Programs**
4. **Restore Access to Universal Food and Nutrition Programs**
5. **Fully Fund the Impact Aid Program**
6. **Continue and Increase Title III Program Funding for Limited English Proficient Students**
7. **Continue and Increase E-Rate Educational Technology Funding**
8. **Continue and Increase Perkins Career and Technical Education Program Funding**
9. **Continue and Increase Title II Teacher and Principal Quality Program Funding**
10. **Maintain and Increase Access to Medicaid Reimbursement Funding**
11. **Reduce the Impact of Temporary Protected Status Expirations**

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1. Increase Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Program Funding

Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) established a federal commitment to fund up to 40 percent of the additional cost of educating students with disabilities. Since that commitment was made in 1975, federal funding has never reached that level. In FY 2027, FCPS projects that more than 31,000 students, or just under 18 percent of FCPS enrollment, will receive special education services. FCPS expects to receive just over $40 million in federal IDEA funding, which covers less than 8 percent of FCPS special education costs. State and primarily local resources must cover the remaining costs of fulfilling these federal mandates.

Requested Actions

The FCSB supports actions that:

- Fully fund the federal commitment to cover 40 percent of the excess costs of special education.
- Make IDEA funding mandatory to provide stable and reliable federal support for special education.

Impact

If the federal government funded IDEA at the 40 percent level, FCPS would receive an estimated additional $165.4 million in FY 2027. This funding would support specialized instruction and adaptive equipment, strengthen staffing, and help manage class sizes. It would also reduce the significant state and local funding needed to meet mandated federal special education requirements.

2. Improve Title I Program Funding

Background
Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides federal funding to schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families. Title I schools conduct needs assessments and develop schoolwide plans targeting the specific needs of their school communities. Funding supports these plans through additional staff, family engagement opportunities, access to pre-kindergarten programs, and instructional materials and supplies. In FY 2027, FCPS expects to receive $35.4 million in Title I, Part A funding, supporting more than 280 positions across fifty-five schools.

Requested Actions
The FCSB supports actions that:

- Increase federal funding for Title I, Part A to provide additional resources to schools serving high concentrations of students from low-income families.
- Provide sufficient and sustained federal funding to implement locally developed schoolwide plans and identified student needs.

Impact
Increased Title I funding would strengthen academic and student supports in the FCPS schools serving the highest concentrations of students from low-income families. Additional funding would support staffing, family engagement, access to pre-kindergarten, and instructional resources. Greater federal investment would also help schools address local needs while reducing the local funding required to maintain these federally supported programs.

3. Protect Access to High-Quality Head Start Programs

Background
Head Start and Early Head Start provide federally funded early childhood education, health, nutrition, and family-support services to eligible children from birth through age five and pregnant women. The program is designed as a comprehensive model supporting both school readiness and family well-being. In August 2026, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services proposed replacing existing Head Start Program Performance Standards with a substantially revised framework, which could significantly impact the quality of services available to children and families. Fairfax currently serves over 2,200 students across 83 school sites via PreK and Early Head Start programs.

Requested Actions
The FCSB supports federal actions that:

- Retain federal minimum standards for group size, staff-to-child ratios, curriculum, home-based services, service duration, language access, health and mental health supports, and services for children with disabilities.
- Retain requirements supporting children's home languages, culturally responsive practice, and communication with families in languages they understand.
- Reconsider the proposed 5 percent administrative cost cap or establish a more realistic cap that recognizes the fixed administrative infrastructure required to operate a safe, compliant, and effective Head Start program. Any waiver process should include clear, predictable, and timely criteria.
- Preserve self-attestation as an eligibility option, supplemented by reasonable verification and documentation procedures designed to prevent fraud without creating barriers for eligible families.
- Reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, eliminate duplicative paperwork requirements, and provide appropriate operational flexibility.

Impact
Head Start's current Performance Standards set consistent expectations for program quality nationwide and allow local programs to respond to community needs. Relying more heavily on state licensing requirements and local discretion could result in significant differences in the services children and families receive based on geography, local capacity, and available resources. Reducing the administrative cost cap would limit resources for key program functions such as eligibility and enrollment administration, fiscal oversight, professional learning, essential comprehensive services, and family engagement. Removing the self-attestation option without establishing an equally accessible alternative could delay enrollment or exclude children from services from families facing the greatest access barriers. Eliminating specific home-language development and requirements to communicate with families in languages they understand would restrict appropriate communication. Ultimately, this would inhibit student progress and impact family engagement and long-term language and literacy development. Targeted changes can simplify federal requirements and reduce duplicative paperwork without eliminating core standards designed to protect program quality and support children and families.

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4. Restore Access to Universal Food and Nutrition Programs

Background

Federal nutrition programs help ensure student access to nutritious meals during the school day. In FY2027, FCPS expects more than 64,000 students, or nearly 37 percent of enrollment, to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Student participation increased significantly when federal funding provided free meals to all students. In 2022, the final year of universal federal meal reimbursement, FCPS served more than 30,000 additional lunches and 20,000 additional breakfasts each day compared with 2023, after universal reimbursement ended. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) also connects eligible students to school meals through direct certification, which automatically qualifies eligible students for free or reduced-price meals.

Requested Actions

The FCSB supports actions that:

- Restore enhanced USDA federal reimbursement rates sufficient to provide high-quality, nutritious school meals at no cost to all students.
- Restore SNAP benefits and related direct-certification provisions that automatically qualify eligible students for free or reduced-price school meals.

Impact

Restoring enhanced federal meal reimbursements would expand student access to nutritious meals and increase participation in school breakfast and lunch programs. Restoring SNAP benefits and direct certification would also reduce administrative and application barriers for families and help ensure qualifying students are automatically connected to school meal benefits.

5. Fully Fund the Impact Aid Program

Background
The federal Impact Aid program provides funding to school divisions that serve federally connected students, which helps offset local costs in communities where federal property or activities can limit local tax revenues. FCPS serves more than 12,700 military-connected students and currently receives approximately $4 million in federal Impact Aid funding.

Requested Actions
The FCSB supports actions that:

- Fully fund the federal Impact Aid program to better compensate school divisions for the costs of serving federally connected students.

Impact
Fully funding Impact Aid would provide FCPS with additional resources to support federally connected students and better reflect the federal government's financial responsibility to communities with a significant federal presence. Based on current funding formulas, FCPS would receive an additional $16.7 million in FY 2027 if Impact Aid were fully funded. This would also reduce pressure on local resources currently used to offset the difference between authorized Impact Aid and actual federal funding.

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6. Continue and Increase Title III Program Funding for Limited English Proficient Students

Background

Title III provides federal funding to support English language instruction that helps multilingual learners develop English language proficiency and succeed academically. Recent changes to Virginia's state accountability system have accelerated the inclusion of English Learner assessment results in school performance measures, highlighting the importance of effective language instruction and support. In FY 2027, FCPS expects more than 30,000 students in grades K–12, or almost 18 percent of total enrollment, to receive multilingual learner services. FCPS currently receives just over $4 million annually in Title III funding.

Requested Actions

The FCSB supports actions to:

- Maintain and increase federal Title III funding to support effective English language instruction and help multilingual learners attain English proficiency.

Impact

Increased Title III funding would strengthen FCPS's ability to provide English language instruction and services that help students develop the language skills needed to access academic content and succeed in school. Additional federal funding would also reduce reliance on local resources to meet the growing need for multilingual learner services.

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7. Continue and Increase E-Rate Educational Technology Funding

Background

The federal E-Rate program helps schools provide reliable internet connectivity and the technology infrastructure needed to support digital learning and cybersecurity. Recent Federal Communications Commission (FCC) actions have created uncertainty about the program's future scope by opening a formal review of E-Rate that specifically asks whether the program should be narrowed or reoriented based on participation in the National School Lunch Program. FCPS currently receives approximately $2 million annually in E-Rate funding.

Requested Actions

The FCSB supports actions to:

- Maintain and increase federal E-Rate funding to support reliable internet connectivity, promote digital equity, and help school divisions address changing technology and cybersecurity needs.
- Preserve E-Rate eligibility and discount levels for school divisions that could be affected by changes based on National School Lunch Program participation or other measures of local resources.

Impact

Maintaining or increasing E-Rate would help FCPS provide reliable connectivity and equitable access to digital learning while reducing pressure on local resources. Continued federal support is important because schools must maintain, replace, secure, and upgrade network infrastructure even after basic broadband access is in place.

8. Continue and Increase Perkins Career and Technical Education Program Funding

Background
The federal Perkins V program supports Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that help students build academic knowledge, technical skills, and to prepare for employment. FCPS currently receives just over $2 million in Perkins CTE funding. Virginia has made high-quality work-based learning (HQWBL) a more important measure of college and career readiness, but opportunities and placements have not expanded to meet the increased emphasis. FCPS students already participate widely in CTE programs. In the Class of 2025, 16,600 students earned industry credentials, and 5,400 students were CTE completers, meaning they completed a CTE concentration and met graduation requirements.

Requested Actions
The FCSB supports actions to:

- Maintain and increase Perkins V program funding to support high-quality CTE programs and career pathways, develop student academic knowledge and technical skills, expand work-based learning opportunities, and prepare students for future employment.

Impact
Continued and increased Perkins V funding would strengthen FCPS CTE programs and expand opportunities for students to gain workplace experience, develop workforce-relevant skills, and earn industry credentials. Greater federal investment would help more students transition successfully to employment and postsecondary opportunities, while supporting multiple pathways to college and career readiness and reducing pressure on local resources.

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9. Continue and Increase Title II Teacher and Principal Quality Program Funding

Background

The federal Title II program supports efforts to improve student achievement by strengthening the quality and effectiveness of teachers and school leaders. Funding supports educator recruitment and retention, professional development, and initiatives to strengthen teacher and principal capacity. FCPS currently receives just under $4 million annually in Title II funding.

Requested Actions

The FCSB supports actions to:

- Maintain and increase federal funding for the Title II program to strengthen teacher and principal recruitment and retention and provide sustained federal resources for high-quality professional learning.

Impact

Continued and increased Title II funding would help FCPS recruit, retain, and develop effective teachers and school leaders, while expanding professional learning that supports effective instruction, leadership, and student achievement. Greater federal investment would also reduce reliance on local resources to sustain critical educator workforce and professional development needs.

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10. Maintain and Increase Access to Medicaid Reimbursement Funding

Background

The Medicaid Reimbursement program allows public school divisions to receive partial federal reimbursement for health-related services provided to students with disabilities. This funding helps offset the cost of services needed to support student access and participation in education, including services required under IDEA and other federal laws. Recent federal Medicaid eligibility and administrative changes do not directly change reimbursement for eligible school-based IDEA services, but they could reduce student enrollment in Medicaid and limit the reimbursement available to school divisions. FCPS projects approximately $3.6 million in Medicaid reimbursements in FY 2027.

Requested Actions:

The FCSB supports actions to:

- Maintain and increase school divisions' access to federal Medicaid reimbursement for qualifying school-based health-related services provided to students with disabilities.
- Avoid federal eligibility, administrative, or funding changes that reduce student Medicaid enrollment or make it more difficult for school divisions to receive reimbursement for eligible services.
- Preserve and simplify school-based Medicaid reimbursement so school divisions can access available federal resources without unnecessary administrative requirements.

Impact

Continued and increased Medicaid reimbursement would help FCPS offset the cost of providing eligible health-related services to students with disabilities. Sustained federal support would also reduce reliance on local resources to provide these federally required services and help preserve funding for instruction and other student supports.

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11. Reduce the Impact of Temporary Protected Status Expirations

Background

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) allows eligible individuals from designated countries to temporarily live and work in the United States when conditions make it unsafe to return home. TPS does not provide permanent immigration status. When TPS for a country ends, affected employees may lose employment authorization unless they qualify for another immigration status or form of employment authorization. Recent TPS terminations have created workforce uncertainty for school divisions. FCPS estimates that 840 current employees could be ineligible to renew their Employment Authorization Documents by 2030.

Requested Actions

The FCSB supports federal actions that:

- Provide adequate transition periods when TPS designations end, giving employees and employers time to prepare.
- Provide clear and timely federal guidance on TPS expiration dates, Employment Authorization Documents, and employer requirements.
- Consider workforce impacts on school divisions when making TPS policy decisions.
- Provide appropriate pathways for eligible, long-term TPS holders to continue lawful employment.

Impact

Unless the employee qualifies for another immigration status or form of employment authorization, loss of TPS requires U.S. employers, including school divisions, to separate qualified employees, including those in difficult-to-fill positions. Losses of current qualified personnel would increase vacancies, disrupt instruction and student support service provision, raise recruitment and training costs, and place additional demands on existing staff. Adequate transition periods and continued lawful employment authorization pathways where permitted would help reduce these workforce disruptions.