Fairfax County School Board DRAFT State Legislative Positions

A. After-School Programs, At-Risk Youth, and Gang Prevention

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Comprehensive and flexible after-school programs and other preventive interventions addressing expanded learning opportunities and academic success, positive peer and adult relationships, adolescent substance abuse, behavioral issues, and gang participation.
2) Availability of and coordination between local, state, federal, and non-profit resources focusing on after-school programs, summertime programs, and initiatives with a proven record of effectiveness that enhance academic, social, physical, and emotional development, address opportunity gaps, and address gang violence prevention.

B. Attendance and Truancy

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Attendance and truancy laws and policies that are clear; that emphasize encouraging attendance through engagement, prevention, and early intervention; and that provide appropriate timelines for addressing attendance issues.
2) Adjustments to attendance and truancy regulations for students exceeding compulsory attendance age who choose to attend and continue their education so that neither the student choosing to continue their education nor the school division providing the opportunity are penalized.
3) Changes in attendance reporting to allow for additional measures of attendance based on student engagement and not solely based on a student's physical presence, to include participation in virtual and remote learning activities.
4) Respecting parents' rights to request an exemption from compulsory school attendance for their student under Virginia Code Section 22.1-254 by reason of "bona fide religious training or belief," but believes that requirements to report on the academic progress of students receiving such an exemption should be aligned with reporting requirements required of all other students receiving home instruction under §22.1-254.1.

C. Charter Schools

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

- Reserving the ultimate say in approving or revoking charter schools for local school boards.

D. College and Workforce Readiness

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Increased coordination of college and work readiness standards between K-12 and higher education, including robust collaborative dual enrollment partnerships and course offerings. Such partnerships should include better-coordinated pathways to credentialing of faculty between local school divisions and institutions of higher learning, allowing for mixed classrooms.
2) Continued local flexibility to determine the most appropriate financial arrangements between individual school divisions and higher education institutions to deliver dual enrollment programming at no cost to students and families, regardless of how or where the instruction is provided.
3) Additional high-quality work-based learning opportunities for students while enrolled in high school to increase exposure to and exploration of career pathways, including expanded internship, externship, apprenticeship, journeyman programs, service learning, credit-bearing partnerships, credit for work experience, maintenance of industry credentials, and other work-based learning opportunities
4) Initiatives to address barriers to accessing high-quality work-based learning opportunities for general education and students with disabilities, as well as for English learners, including expanded timing flexibility

for completion and the provision of transportation.

5) Ensuring students have multiple pathways to earn a diploma and the flexibility to explore career clusters of interest in preparation for postsecondary opportunities including: increasing the number of high school elective courses that can substitute as graduation requirements in other content areas, additional routes to fulfilling graduation requirements in lieu of a year-long course, additional opportunities for Career and Technical Education (CTE) coursework and credentials to fulfill verified credit requirements, and recognition of relevant coursework in middle school.
6) Allowing for the substitution of skills-based courses focused on college readiness and college-level skills, such as the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) elective course, for other required high school graduation standard course credits, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE).
7) Additional flexibility for older and non-traditional students to obtain high school credit through General Education Development (GED) programs, concurrent enrollment, enrollment in adult education high school completion courses, including expansion of virtual instructional offerings.
8) Additional state funding for Career and Technical (CTE) education programs, including funding to help offset the increasing costs of Career and Technical Education credentials.
9) Funding of the student costs for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate end-of-course examinations and other related fees.
10) Preserving the state's current split of federal Perkins Career and Technical Education funding which allocates 85 percent of available funding to K-12 institutions.
11) Creating employer incentives to make work-based learning and workforce development opportunities available for students, including students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-income students.
12) Ensuring that eligibility for financial aid for post-secondary and workforce development programs and opportunities is available to recipients of all of Virginia's diploma types.
13) Funding for post-secondary bridge programs to aid in workforce readiness and connection to career opportunities.
14) Funding to increase the access and participation of under-represented students in fields such as STEAM, digital arts media, and trades requiring specialized skills and training.
15) Funding to provide students with access to explore emerging technology fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Quantum Information Science (QIS) to build the skills needed for careers of the future.
16) Recurring and dedicated state funding for adult Registered Apprenticeship programs and other adult career training administered by public school divisions providing adult education to address Virginia's workforce shortages.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

- The imposition of a tuition floor on dual enrollment courses.

E. Early Childhood Education

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) State provision of high-quality early childhood programs for all eligible age groups, provided that the state furnishes full funding for implementation and ongoing operation and increases the per-pupil funding of such programs.
2) Paying particular attention to increasing per pupil funding, minimizing start-up costs, reducing, or eliminating any required local match, and funding assistance for capital facilities, in the absence of state provision of full funding.
3) Flexibility to account for local at-risk criteria, including regional variations in cost of living, when setting eligibility standards for early childhood programs; particularly for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).
4) Providing school divisions with fully funded VPI slots for eligible families enrolling after the initial fall membership verification date.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

- Shifting mandated responsibility for early childhood programs and capital facilities funding to localities or subjecting such funding to state equalization formulas.

F. Educational Technology

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Increased state funding to help local schools refresh and modernize educational technology infrastructure, meet staffing needs, provide ongoing professional development to improve instruction, close the digital divide, support online learning and assessment, and manage extensive data collection and reporting requirements.
2) Directed state investments dedicated to assisting local school divisions in addressing the cyber and data security needs of school divisions.
3) Flexibility to use state technology funds to either purchase or lease technology equipment and software.
4) Flexibility for school divisions to pursue locally developed technology plans as well as innovative approaches to the development and funding of educational technology, including partnerships with higher education and private industry.
5) Creating a state clearing house to facilitate the movement of student records for students who transfer between school divisions in Virginia.
6) Directed state investments to enhance the accessibility of technology and broadband connectivity to all schools and students.
7) Artificial intelligence (AI) regulations and ethical use standards that provide appropriate safeguards against misuse but that do not overly restrict local school division flexibility to leverage the educational and instructional promise of this emerging technology.

G. Employer/Employee Relations

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) The right of local school board employees to enter into collectively bargained agreements that value and balance the needs of employees with the educational mission of the school division and that preserves the constitutionally protected supervisory authority of the local school board.
2) The right of every school board to adopt its own method of communicating with employees as long as the constitutional authority of the board to make public policy is not compromised.
3) Amending §22.1-315 of the Code of Virginia to clarify that school employees charged with an enumerated offense are entitled to the return of escrowed salary only if (1) they are found innocent of the enumerated charge and (2) they have not pleaded to a lesser offense or received a deferred or suspended imposition of sentence.
4) Development, implementation, and funding for a centralized and standardized state reporting and notification system regarding public school employee misconduct.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Changes to the teacher grievance procedure, the *Regulations Governing the Employment of Professional Personnel*, or other state laws, regulations, procedures, or guidelines that would diminish the authority of school boards or that would impose unreasonable and unnecessary administrative and financial burdens.
2) Mandated benefits for local employees, which would interfere with the right of local school boards to contract benefits directly with their employees.

H. English Learners

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Additional funding resources for the provision of appropriate academic and English language instructional programs and supports, including reduced classroom staffing ratios, and for appropriate content area and language proficiency assessments for English learners.
2) Funding English language proficiency assessments in the same manner as the state pays for other assessments required for state or federally mandated accountability programs.
3) Expanded availability of locally awarded verified credits and other credit accommodations aligned to those currently available for students with disabilities to English learners as deemed appropriate by a student's English Learner Committee established under Department of Education guidance.
4) Additional state resources to provide appropriate services to English learner students new to the United States who enter Virginia schools with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE students).
5) Increased state resources for interpretation and translation services, access to family literacy programs, and

adult English classes for parents and guardians of English learners.

6) Adding flexibility for English learner students who transfer into a Virginia high school during ninth grade (after the first 20 hours of instruction per course) to be assigned to the subsequent graduation cohort, consistent with their first full academic year of enrollment in Virginia.
7) Adopting provisions that delay counting reading and mathematics content performance for English learners until at least 24 months of instruction while allowing growth monitoring after 12 months. (federal "Exception B."), as allowed under federal law.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

- Accountability measures that include the scores of English Learners on content assessments for school accountability before receiving sufficient English language instruction and specifically opposes setting the threshold for inclusion at less than 12 months of enrollment in U.S. public schools.

I. Environmental Sustainability/Renewable Energy

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) State efforts to reduce the County's greenhouse gas emissions and operational demand for energy through efficiency, conservation, renewable energy, and education.
2) State resources, incentives, opportunities, and targeted goals for expanding renewable energy, and energy efficiency and removing existing barriers to such efforts.
3) Minimizing or eliminating interconnectivity costs for small-scale solar projects.
4) State resources to assist in the deployment of electric school buses and related charging infrastructure in local school divisions as well as state capital funding dedicated to net-zero and sustainability-related building construction, renovation, and infrastructure.
5) Additional dual enrollment and high-quality work-based learning opportunities focused on careers related to environmental sustainability.
6) State resources to encourage school locations and school access developments that maximize the ability for students and staff to bike and walk to school.
7) State resources to develop and use outdoor classrooms and learning spaces at schools.

J. Freedom of Information Act

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Revision and amendment of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and companion regulations, such as those issued by the Library of Virginia regarding records retention, to achieve the appropriate balance between the considerable investment in time and money required for compliance, protection of personal information, and ensuring the people of the Commonwealth ready access to public records.
2) Addressing and potentially adjusting FOIA requirements in light of the growth of the use of electronic communications and social media to communicate more quickly and efficiently with the public, which has resulted in increasingly broad, complex, and burdensome requests, including additional flexibility in reporting timelines regarding requests for extraordinary volumes of records or extraordinarily lengthy searches.
3) Creation of a "third party disclosure" FOIA exemption that would allow for the redaction of private information from emails that would not otherwise be subject to FOIA except for the fact they had been forwarded to an email address subject to FOIA.
4) Clarification of current FOIA exemptions for human resources investigations.
5) Resources to assist in compliance with FOIA requirements, including reimbursement for mandated redactions from requested documents.
6) Granting local school boards and other local public bodies expanded authority to conduct electronic communication meetings, including the removal of limitations on the remote participation of members.
7) Flexibility in how to fulfill mandates for required legal notices for certain public hearings and meetings.
8) Amending the definition of "meeting" under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to require public notice for formal meetings or informal assemblages of 40% or more of members of school boards rather than the current standard which applies regardless of the number of members on a board.
9) Supports the equal applicability of FOIA provisions, requirements, and flexibilities to all levels of government.
10) Clarification that scholastic records available pursuant to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy

Act (FERPA) should be subject to federal requirements and timelines for producing such records.

K. Governance and Mandates

The Fairfax County School Board believes that the ultimate decisions regarding appropriate policy or school governance interventions to address instructional and operational issues should remain with local school boards, as made in collaboration with their parents and the local community.

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Treating elected local school boards under the Code of Virginia in the same manner as other elected local governing bodies and boards.
2) Permitting school boards to seek disclosure by potential vendors whether the vendor imposes pre-dispute arbitration on their own customers or employees and to offer alternatives to pre-dispute arbitration which preserves protected student privacy and alternatives for parents or guardians.
3) Initiating a Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study on school segregation in Virginia, in light of the November 2020 VCU/Penn State Study on School Segregation in the State of Virginia.
4) Efforts to ensure the Virginia Board of Education is committed to serving the interests of all students by strengthening its stability to help provide consistent and collaborative leadership for Virginia's public schools.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

5) Any mandate that imposes new requirements on school divisions without fully providing the resources necessary for its successful implementation. This includes funding as well as corresponding resources to minimize or compensate for burdens on instructional or administrative staff time.

L. Non-Discrimination

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Policies that provide students and employees with an equitable, safe, and supportive school and workplace environment.
2) Policies that protect students and employees, on the basis of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, or disability, from discrimination under any educational program, activity, or employment.

M. Post-Secondary Education

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Increased state funding for the additional faculty and buildings needed to accommodate the growing number of qualified Virginia high school graduates seeking admission to the Commonwealth's community colleges and four-year colleges and universities.
2) Maintaining suitable ratios of in-state and out-of-state students in each of the Commonwealth's institutions of higher education.
3) Eligibility for in-state tuition for students who are lawfully present in the United States under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, provided they meet Virginia's domicile requirements.
4) Efforts to ensure Virginia's public universities have stable, student-focused Boards of Visitors that safeguard institutional reputations and strengthen their ability to provide a premier education for all students.

N. Poverty and Student Achievement

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Additional state-level K-12 resources, including additional instructional and support positions, targeted to

assist schools with high concentrations of or numbers of students in poverty.
2) Education funding formulas that more accurately account for and reflect the impact of large numbers of students in poverty within a school division, regardless of the overall percentage of the division they represent.
3) Coordinated local, state, and federal policies and resources to help address the root causes of poverty in the larger community, including programs to address food, housing, and health care insecurity, and efforts to reduce concentrations of poverty through strategic community planning in collaboration with the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.
4) Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's (JLARC) 2023 recommendation to update the methodology by which Virginia calculates student poverty.

O. Retirement/Virginia Retirement System

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) State funding for the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) to sustain long-term fiscal solvency and to meet its legal obligations to vested school system employees.
2) Increased state funding contributions for VRS, allowing for lower required local contribution rates.
3) VRS consideration of the impacts that teacher retirement contribution rates can have on local school divisions during their rate-setting process.
4) Post-retirement employment options that do not adversely affect the employer and that encourage educational employees to work after they have accrued the maximum retirement benefits.
5) State resources for local school divisions to provide VRS-related services. Such services include preparing estimates of VRS benefits; counseling employees on the benefits provided by VRS; handling VRS forms such as the VRS retirement application and related documents; assisting employees with VRS Disability Retirement applications; and correcting VRS records.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Caps upon or the establishment of rates below what localities would be required to bear of the state share of VRS contribution rates for teachers.
2) Mandating the inclusion of salary supplements for temporary voluntary activities, such as club sponsorship or coaching, in the definition of creditable compensation.

P. Revenue Alternatives

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) A tax structure in the Commonwealth that provides localities with sufficient state revenue to better address the resource demands of mandated education programs. Any revisions to the tax structure should result in long-term additional revenue capacity, not in revenue-diminishing or revenue-neutral changes among different taxing sources.
2) Local revenue flexibility to accommodate various economic and demographic conditions, including expanding local taxing authority and expanding county tax authority to match authority already available to Virginia cities.
3) Referendum authority to raise local sales taxes with revenues dedicated to school construction and renovation capital projects.
4) Continued local school board flexibility to charge appropriate fees for programs and activities that are not directly related to core educational programs.
5) Fiscal autonomy for locally elected local school boards.
6) The permanent replacement of education funding revenue lost due to the elimination of the state sales tax on groceries and food for home consumption.

Q. School Calendar

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

- Local school board control over school calendars and the school day, including allowing local school boards

to set the opening day of school and school holidays.

R. School Construction

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Developing and funding adequate and equitable state programs to assist localities with public school construction, renovation, and major maintenance projects.
2) Exempting contractors from the retail sales and use tax on materials purchased while under contract by local school divisions for construction, repair, or other real-estate-related services.
3) Full restoration of local government authority to accept cash and in-kind proffers that accurately reflect and compensate for the impact of development on the school division, regardless of the location of the new development.

S. Special Education

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Special education programs that help every child learn to his or her potential, which necessarily includes additional and mandatory federal and state funding to help local school divisions deliver those services. Such funding should remain aligned with increasing needs to support students with disabilities and keep pace with evolving accountability requirements.
2) Expanding alternatives for demonstrating subject matter competency and for earning verified credits as deemed appropriate by a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.
3) A uniform set of rules and guidelines allowing school districts to seek Medicaid reimbursement for administrative and transportation expenses associated with Medicaid-eligible services provided to students with disabilities who are being served under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
4) Maximizing Medicaid reimbursements for nursing and personal care services, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physical therapy, audiology, psychological and transportation services, including telehealth services that are provided virtually or remotely.
5) Adherence to language in IDEA asking states to minimize the number of additional rules, regulations, and policies imposed upon local school divisions above and beyond the requirements already imposed by IDEA while preserving current requirements for parent/guardian involvement, participation, and consent to IEPs.
6) Leaving the ultimate determination of the provision of appropriate services for each student covered under IDEA to that student's IEP team, subject to due process protections.
7) The existing convention which places the burden of proof during due process proceedings on the party bringing the action.
8) Authority for local school boards to apply timely and fair discipline to all students, regardless of disability status, where the violation is not determined by the student's IEP team to be a manifestation of their disability.
9) Initiatives to address chronic shortages of qualified special education teachers.
10) Additional state resources and staffing dedicated to improved academic and career planning, postsecondary transition planning services, and postsecondary employment options for students with disabilities, including expanded availability of adult service opportunities.
11) Continued flexibility related to the use of Children's Services Act (CSA) funds for students with disabilities who require private special education school placements without daily rate caps.

T. Standards of Accreditation and School Accountability

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) A state accountability system for schools based on a system of balanced measures of student achievement, student academic progress, engagement, and outcomes toward college and workforce readiness goals. The Board specifically supports adjusting school accountability performance weighting to consider mastery and growth more equitably in elementary and middle schools.
2) An accountability system that identifies and focuses on those schools and divisions that are most in need of improvement based on attainable thresholds for all student groups, with school improvement guidelines and

expectations that are grounded in evidence of effectiveness, and that allow flexibility for school divisions to adopt evidence-based improvement models that align with their specific goals and improvement focus.

3) Reasonable reporting requirements, guidelines, and regulations for both early intervention and remediation programs that do not compromise their objectives of improving student academic achievement.
4) Accountability measures that recognize the unique circumstances of English learners new to the United States with limited or interrupted formal schooling (SLIFE students).
5) Alternative accountability measures for nontraditional school programs to reflect their unique mission and programming.
6) Use of an expanded graduation readiness indicator within the state's school accountability system that reflects the full time granted to both students with disabilities and English learners to earn a diploma under both Virginia and federal law.
7) A stable and consistent accountability system for measuring year-over-year school performance.
8) Allowing sufficient implementation time for necessary adjustments in local instructional practice, student course selection, and staffing whenever there are changes to state accountability measures.
9) A return to identifying consistently underperforming student groups by setting specific achievable long-term goals and interim measures of progress based on historical performance results across all statewide indicators rather than recalculating accountability targets every year based on comparative school outcomes in a subset of indicators.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) State accountability models that base division-wide intervention determinations on the performance of a set number of schools within a division, without regard to the total number of schools in the division.
2) Oversimplifying school achievement measurements by aggregating the wealth of data already available about school performance into a single summative rating, and further opposes lowering the performance category for schools identified for federal support and improvement based on a single student group,_without full representation of the performance elements making up the summative rating.
3) State "takeovers" of underperforming local schools or other directives that override local authority.
4) Making policy decisions solely or over-reliantly on student scores on standardized, high-stakes tests.
5) Placing an excessive administrative burden on school principals in documenting evidence of compliance with operational standards for school accreditation.

U. Standards of Learning

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Reductions in the number and impact of mandated, standardized assessments on students, teachers, and schools, shifting toward a more balanced assessment system, including performance-based assessments that inform instruction.
2) Development of subject matter assessments in a student's native language for assessments of grade level content standards, such as Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.
3) Standards of Learning content standards and aligned assessments that emphasize content knowledge, conceptual understanding, application, and critical thinking over rote memorization and low-level thinking skills, while incorporating universal design principles, including plain language, to more accurately measure what students know and understand.
4) Improvements in state assessment result reporting to include release to school divisions before public release, increased visibility for the number of tests given, and limiting subject-level assessment reporting to align with federal requirements.
5) State content standards, curriculum guidelines, and assessments that promote culturally responsive educational practices free of systemic racism, discrimination, and background knowledge biases.
6) Providing local school divisions with greater flexibility in determining the appropriate allocation of instructional time in elementary schools across specific subject areas.
7) Development of enhanced assessment management and data monitoring tools for use by divisions to improve efficiency and consistency in their application of revised state testing expectations and to strengthen and support their use of assessment data to inform instructional decisions and to design appropriate student interventions.
8) Continued implementation of literacy instruction that is grounded in the science of reading.
9) Continued access to rigorous and advanced mathematics instruction in grades K-12.

10) Allowing public K12 schools to provide virtual classroom driver education instruction.
11) Expanded use of nationally and internationally benchmarked substitute assessments for high school performance and participation within school accountability determinations, including but not limited to Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) and SAT assessments for all accountability subject areas.
12) Adjustments in newly adopted SOL testing requirements to clarify available flexibility for student testing requirements.
13) Balancing instructional time prior to SOL assessment administration with the need to ensure sufficient time to accommodate students with multiple required tests, students with testing accommodations that permit multiple days to complete each test, as well as students who might require assessment retakes.
14) Local flexibility over whether and how SOL assessment results might inform student classroom grades.
15) Shifting away from a reliance on SOL assessments for verification of course credits for student graduation.
16) Rigorous standards and performance measures, including cut scores, established through transparent and realistic processes which reflect Virginia's academic standards and performance descriptors, minimize administrative impacts, and align with the implementation timeline for Virginia's new assessment program.
17) Returning to the standardization of assessment cut scores across Standards of Learning tests in all subject areas and grade levels, such that the same scaled score represents a passing score on every SOL test across levels, subjects, and years.
18) Allowing sufficient implementation time for necessary adjustments in local instructional practice, student course selection, and staffing whenever there are changes to state assessments.
19) Adjusting assessment pathways and eligibility criteria to provide flexible, student-focused options, including growth-based metrics and performance assessments, that accurately evaluate academic performance for learners who do not qualify for the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP), but who face barriers accessing grade-level SOL standards.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

- Using standardized test scores as the sole basis for decisions regarding a student's appropriate grade-level assignment.

V. Standards of Quality

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Adoption and maintenance of appropriate and adequately funded Standards of Quality (SOQ) to accurately reflect and fully support actual local instructional and support priorities and operating expenses, best practices, and local needs; which fully account for the effects of cost increases due to inflation; and which keep pace with evolving accountability requirements.
2) Staffing standards that are flexible enough to address varying local service needs and accommodate innovative instructional practices.
3) SOQ that reflect the positions and support already in place at local expense necessary to carry out mandates found in other sections of the Code, in other Virginia Board of Education regulations, or in federal law, including for example, dedicated funding for full time test coordinator positions to help with implementation and administration of Standards of Learning assessments beyond existing flexibility to use instructional technology resource teacher funding to employ a data coordinator position.
4) Funding for the SOQ that fully covers the total state share (55 percent) of the costs of establishing and maintaining an educational program of high quality, as envisioned in the Constitution of Virginia.
5) Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's (JLARC) 2023 recommendation to eliminate "Great Recession" era changes to the SOQ funding formula, including elimination of the support cap, re-instating non-personal cost categories, and re-instating the federal fund deduction methodology used prior to FY 2009.
6) JLARC's 2023 recommendation to calculate salary and other Standards of Quality formula cost assumptions using division averages, rather than a linear weighted average.
7) Specific recognition within the Standards of the critical role that both school facilities and technology infrastructure play in the successful implementation of the instructional program prescribed by the SOQ.
8) Further evaluation of the policy implications and fiscal impacts of JLARC's 2023 recommendation to replace the state's existing position-centered funding formulas under the Standards of Quality with weighted per-student funding formulas that account for variations in local cost of living and wage markets.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Shifting away from the state's Constitutional responsibility for funding public education onto the localities and local taxpayers.
2) Changes in the state's biennial re-benchmarking process that further erode the connection between what the state is obligated to pay for K-12 education and the actual costs of providing services.
3) Deducting local or federal revenues from Basic Aid funding calculations.
4) The FCSB opposes the continued practice of shifting Standards of Quality and other recurring cost programs into the state's lottery-funded accounts.

W. State Education Funding: Formulas and Practices

The Fairfax County School Board (FCSB) believes that state funding for elementary and secondary education should adequately and appropriately support quality programs for all students in the Commonwealth. The state should fairly share responsibility with each local school board for the true costs to localities of implementing Virginia's Standards of Quality, Standards of Accreditation, Standards of Learning, and other state-mandated education-related programs. This includes fair, equitable, and up-to-date state funding distribution formulas, including the Local Composite Index (LCI), that accurately reflect local ability to pay, revenue generation capacity, local cost of living, local salary costs, and the resource needs of local school divisions.

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Amending Article VII of the Virginia Constitution, to mandate that the General Assembly "ensure" (as opposed to merely "seek" to ensure) that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained.
2) Providing full and appropriate funding for the biennial re-benchmark of Direct Aid to Public Education. Should the General Assembly fail to fully fund re-benchmarking, the state should grant waiver requests from mandated requirements in proportion to the shortfall.
3) Recognizing absolute population numbers as well as percentages for programs targeting funding resources for English learners, students receiving special education services, and students in poverty.
4) Funding formulas based on individual school populations, rather than solely on aggregate system-wide data.
5) Funding formulas that account for student population growth, measured both by percentage as well as by absolute population growth, as a key factor that drives education funding needs in high-growth localities.
6) Continued distribution of some funding on a uniform state/local match, such as technology grants.
7) Funding formulas used for infrastructure needs, such as for technology and construction, which recognize variations in school enrollments and student population growth, rather than basing distribution on a per-school basis or on the Local Composite Index.
8) Funding formulas that distribute state aid for early intervention and remediation programs for all eligible students by using the local school division's composite index or .5000 – whichever is lower.
9) Increasing the proportion of state sales tax dedicated to public education.
10) Retaining the current mechanism for distributing sales tax revenues based on each locality's number of school-age children.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Artificial limitations on the growth of state expenditures, such as limiting expenditure growth to the rate of inflation and general population increases.
2) Reducing the discretionary authority local school boards currently have to set their own budget priorities, such as requiring school divisions to spend certain percentages of their budget on certain activities or budget categories.

X. State Education Funding: Cost of Competing Adjustment

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) JLARC's 2023 recommendation to replace the current cost of competing adjustment with a more accurate adjustment based on a Virginia cost of labor index that better accounts for differing labor costs across school divisions in calculating compensation funding through the Standards of Quality formula.

2) In the absence of adopting a Virginia cost of labor index, the continued use of an appropriate, up-to-date, and fully funded cost of competing factor for both instructional and support personnel in the Standards of Quality reimbursement formulas, including full restoration of the support position adjustment and JLARC's 2023 recommendation to apply the cost of competing adjustment to facility and transportation staff salaries in the SOQ formula.

Y. State Education Funding: Local Composite Index

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Lowering the current .8000 cap on the LCI to increase the state's minimum share of education funding for every local school division.
2) Hold-harmless provisions to mitigate the effects of biennial changes in the LCI.
3) An in-depth review of the LCI focused on JLARC's 2023 recommendation to replace the LCI with a revenue capacity index to more accurately measure local ability to pay.

Z. State Education Funding: Program Specific Funding

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Increased state funding for instructional and support position salaries without state revenue contingencies.
2) Increased funding for all regional, academic year Governor's Schools, with annual adjustment of the add-on per pupil amount for academic year Governor's Schools in conjunction with the basic aid per pupil adjustment, as well as funding based on total uncapped enrollments. In addition, the FCSB supports state funding for capital construction and improvements at regional academic year Governor's Schools.
3) Additional state funding to help address the local education-related impacts associated with major regional corporate relocations, such as increases in K-12 enrollments in particular communities.
4) Continued state resources dedicated to remediation and learning recovery services for our most vulnerable student populations.

AA. Student Activities

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

- Developing state-wide standards and enforcement protocols to prevent racism, discrimination, bullying, and all forms of violence during interscholastic activities.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

- Mandates to require local school boards to allow students who are not currently enrolled full-time in a public school in their locality to participate in student athletics and activities.

AB. Student Discipline

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Maintaining the current statutory authority of local school boards to adopt regulations permitting them to choose among alternative discipline procedures specified in the Code of Virginia for handling cases of suspension, expulsion, and exclusion.
2) Regulations and procedures that enable prompt, understandable, consistent, and fair disciplinary action for all students.
3) Continued local school board authority and discretion for offering alternative education programs to students, including those who have been suspended, expelled, excluded, or otherwise disciplined; as well as increased

availability of state funding resources for local school boards to implement alternatives to suspension and/or expulsion, such as restorative justice initiatives.

4) Limiting the required reporting of school-based student offenses to law enforcement only to cases where the offense would be a felony, or, in the case of instances of assault or assault and battery without bodily injury, reporting such cases to the police at the discretion of the principal.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Legislative imposition of universally applicable restrictions on local school board authority to take disciplinary action against students for specific actions or behaviors, particularly in cases of offenses that endanger students and/or staff such as those involving drugs, weapons, physical injury, or offenses of a sexual nature.
2) Legislative requirements that local school boards use any particular disciplinary measure unless it is required by federal law; and mandates to provide educational services to students (other than those served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) whom the local school board has suspended, expelled, or excluded.

AC. Student Graduation Requirements

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Preserving local school division authority to adopt graduation requirements beyond state mandates to meet local needs, while ensuring that any statewide changes to instructional or graduation requirements are informed by school divisions and key stakeholders, evaluated for fiscal and instructional impacts, and considered in the context of existing student requirements.
2) Additional flexibility regarding graduation requirements for out-of-state transfer students, including leveraging flexibility for military transfer students provided under the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

AD. Student Health and Wellness

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Significantly increased state resources for school programs and staffing - including psychologists, nurses, school counselors, social workers, and community-based initiatives - to address students' growing mental and physical health needs and to keep pace with evolving accountability requirements. This support helps schools address issues like childhood obesity, sleep, menstrual product availability, student mental health, safety, suicide prevention, and other public health crises.
2) Maintaining locally based authority and flexibility to determine the school health, mental health, and counseling models that most appropriately meet a division's needs via local policies and staffing, including preservation of the role that local health departments play in the provision of school health services. Should the General Assembly choose to mandate health-related programs or staffing, adequate and appropriate state resources must be allocated before local school divisions would be required to implement changes.
3) Current policies allowing parents to review Family Life Education (FLE) curricula and, at their discretion, to opt their student out of participation from FLE lessons.
4) Increased state reimbursement for both the school lunch and school breakfast programs, including state revenues to facilitate expansion of universal free meals availability, the availability of high quality and nutritious food options, as well as to address ongoing funding challenges for food and nutrition programs.
5) Additional funding, associated supports, and coordinated strategies to meet the growing need for substance use disorder services that target specific high-risk age groups, particularly regarding fentanyl, other opioids, and vaping. Evidence-based approaches to prevention and substance misuse treatment are necessary to address these public health crises.

AE. Student Safety

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Providing and funding a safe and secure learning environment for its students and personnel, which includes

securing physical facilities, addressing student mental health and wellness, as well as educating students regarding the safe use of the internet and other instructional technologies.
2) State funding sufficient to support at least one uniformed School Resource Officer (SRO) in each middle school and high school in the Commonwealth, as well as state funding to provide additional safety and security personnel in elementary schools.
3) State resources for the active monitoring by state and local offices of probation and parole of individuals in the State Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry.
4) Dedicated and ongoing state funding for local school boards to use in proactively ensuring safe, secure, and respectful school environments, including advanced tools and technologies that help detect and reduce weapons in schools.
5) Allowing local school boards to be rigorous in banning the possession of weapons on school property to protect the safety of students in the school environment.
6) Authorization for localities to ban possession of dangerous weapons in recreation centers and prohibition of the sale of look-alike firearms, particularly BB and pellet guns, to minors.
7) Allowing localities the option of regulating the proximity of a gun store to a public school.
8) Maintaining the confidentiality of school-specific and district-wide emergency/crisis plans.
9) Comprehensive gun violence prevention legislation to help protect the health and safety of our students, families, and staff.
10) Additional local authority and flexibility to address traffic and pedestrian safety issues in and around school zones, including flexibility in setting speed limits, the use of speed cameras, or other traffic calming measures.
11) Greater flexibility in VDOT project approval processes and design standards and increased coordination between localities and the state when considering speed limits on state-maintained roads.
12) State funding for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and roadway safety improvements, including projects that provide safer access to schools.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Allowing or requiring teachers or other non-law enforcement officials to carry concealed handguns in schools.
2) State mandates to place School Resource Officers in particular schools; such personnel decisions should remain with local school boards.

AF. Student Transportation

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Measures that foster safe transportation for pupils as well as the efficient operation of school buses and school division transportation systems.
2) Continued focus on policies and technologies that assist in the enforcement of the prohibition on passing stopped school buses.
3) Findings regarding the safety value of installing safety belts on large school buses which conclude that lap belts appear to have little, if any benefit, in reducing serious injuries and actually could increase the incidence of neck and abdominal injuries. While the use of combination lap/shoulder belts could provide some benefit, misuse could result in serious injuries.
4) Eliminating requirements to equip school buses with EZ Pass transponders to operate on any toll lanes, including Express Lanes, for which they are already exempt from paying tolls.
5) Addressing barriers to entry for school bus driver candidates, particularly related to eligibility requirements, to Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training costs, and to expediting licensure timelines.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

- Involving local school boards in the provision of transportation for nonpublic school students.

AG. Teachers and Instructional Personnel

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining high-quality, diverse educators. These initiatives include competitive salaries, financial aid for teacher preparation, alternative licensure and career switcher programs

(with rigorous requirements, including required practical experience), National Board certification incentives, clinical faculty programs, professional development schools, tuition reimbursement, and tax relief/housing support.

2) Expansion of and increased funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan program and similar programs providing education loan forgiveness in exchange for classroom teaching service time.
3) Rigorous and fair performance evaluation systems, including school board discretion to determine the appropriate weighting of student academic progress components in teacher evaluation systems, as well as the ability to remove ineffective teachers.
4) Significantly increased state resources for and availability of high-quality comprehensive induction programs, effective mentoring, and professional development to better prepare teachers and school administrators to successfully manage such challenges as educational accountability, addressing opportunity gaps, and the integration of technology for instruction and improving student achievement.
5) A comprehensive evaluation of the appropriateness of initial teacher licensure and licensure renewal requirements, particularly as new mandates are added each year, and to simplify the process for prospective applicants. Discussions of possible new requirements must be evaluated considering the additional workload they place on teachers and balanced with consideration of relaxing or eliminating existing requirements.
6) Improved alignment between post-secondary teacher and administrator preparation, licensure requirements (state and federal), and the actual skills and content knowledge educators need to succeed. This includes emphasizing classroom and behavior management, understanding the needs of students receiving special education services and of English learners, universal design principles, and literacy instruction based on the science of reading.
7) A comprehensive evaluation of Virginia statutes governing teacher employment, grievance, suspension, and dismissal.
8) Reform to the process for submission of licensure applications and renewals to the state, to streamline processing and reporting.
9) Additional state funding, resources, and policies to facilitate and accelerate the process of conducting employee background checks, including state approval for specific local positions authorized to conduct employee background checks.
10) Additional routes to provisional or conditional licensure in high-need fields, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and special education, and incorporation of additional flexibility in provisional or conditional licensure for teachers seeking to add further endorsement areas (even in non-high need fields) when those individuals can secure an intention to hire from a school administrator in a high poverty school.
11) Dedicating ongoing state resources to support local participation in Virginia's implementation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Next Generation Identification (NGI) Noncriminal Justice Rap Back Service.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) The elimination of continuing contracts.
2) Changes to the grievance process that do not preserve adequate due process protections.
3) The use of standardized test scores as the sole or predominant measure of teacher effectiveness.

AH. Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits, and Tax Deductions

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Mandates for choice programs between school divisions or choice programs that include private schools; as well as state or federal mandates for intra-district choice programs (within one school division).
2) Diverting public education funds away from local public schools to non-public schools in the form of tuition tax credits, tax deductions, education savings accounts, or vouchers as means of reimbursing parents for their children's educational expenses, grades K-12.
3) Measures requiring the transfer of local taxpayer funds to other jurisdictions, to a statewide institution, or to private providers should a student choose to attend a virtual program outside of their home school division.

Fairfax County School Board DRAFT Federal Legislative Positions

A. Educational Technology

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Continuing, adequate funding for educational technology and internet connectivity (E-Rate), including additional flexibility to use E-Rate funds for mobile internet infrastructure, devices, and connectivity for remote or at-home use.
2) Preservation of 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.
3) Dedicated resources for cyber and data security for school and school division technology infrastructure.

B. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Common sense federal accountability programs that ensure fair, accurate, and meaningful assessments of student achievement.
2) Alternative accountability measures for nontraditional school programs to reflect their unique mission and programming.
3) Continuing federal funding for remediation and learning recovery services for our most vulnerable student populations.
4) Addressing contradictions between the federal adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), which focuses on 4-year graduation rates, and federal special education laws allowing students to access services until age 22.
5) Increasing transparency of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment results reporting to include not only the testing results, but also the number of students, schools, and school divisions included in the assessment sample.

Oppose:

- Making policy decisions solely or overly reliant on student scores on standardized, high-stakes tests.

C. Food and Nutrition Programs

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Restoring enhanced United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) federal reimbursement rates to continue the provision of high-quality and nutritious free meals to all students.
2) Restoring Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and related direct-certification provisions that automatically qualify eligible students for free or reduced-price school meals.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Efforts to undermine Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and supports returning these programs to their full authority and funding levels prior to congressional action in 2025 (H.R. 1, 119th Cong., Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72, 4 Jul 2025), ensuring they can meet children's health care and nutritional needs.
2) Changing eligibility requirements for federal assistance programs to directly or indirectly reduce student access to free and reduced-price school meals (FRM) or school breakfast programs.

D. Head Start

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Retaining 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.
2) Retaining requirements supporting children's home languages, culturally responsive practice, and communication with families in languages they understand.
3) Preserving self-attestation as an eligibility option, supplemented by reasonable verification and documentation procedures designed to prevent fraud without creating barriers for eligible families.
4) Reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, elimination of duplicative paperwork requirements, and appropriate operational flexibility.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

- Reductions to current administrative cost caps that do not recognize the fixed infrastructure required to operate a safe, compliant, and effective Head Start program.

E. Impact Aid

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Fully funding the federal Impact Aid program, which is intended to offset the local impact of federally connected students as well as those associated with federal military base relocation decisions.
2) Additional Impact Aid funding to address the impacts of concentrations of military-connected families within localities.
3) Additional Impact Aid funding for students with disabilities who receive special needs exemptions to attend military-connected schools.
4) Revising the Impact Aid eligibility identification process which would automatically "opt-in" any student with a military student identifier as created under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
5) Facilitating and streamlining military student records transfers for military-connected youth transferring into or out of FCPS schools.

F. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Mandatory funding for chronically underfunded special education programs to meet the federal commitment to fund 40 percent of the "excess costs" of special education as promised but never realized since the 1975 adoption of federal special education laws (currently known as IDEA).
2) Allowing school division use of additional special education funds to supplant local funds that since 1975 have been expended to make up the deficit in promised federal support.

G. Medicaid

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Maintaining and increasing school divisions' access to federal Medicaid reimbursement for qualifying school-based health-related services provided to students with disabilities; including telehealth services.
2) Avoiding 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.
3) Preserving and simplifying school-based Medicaid reimbursement so school divisions can access available federal resources without unnecessary administrative requirements.

H. Perkins Career and Technical Education Program Funding

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

- Maintaining and increasing 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.

I. Temporary Protected Status

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Clear and timely federal guidance on Temporary Protected Status (TPS) expiration dates, Employment Authorization documents, and employer requirements
2) Providing adequate transition periods when TPS designations end.
3) The FCSB supports providing appropriate pathways for eligible, long-term TPS holders to continue lawful employment.

J. Title I

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Continuation and full funding of the Title I, Part A grant within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that serves schools with the highest percentage of children from low-income families.
2) Continued use of current Title I formula grants to provide critical and consistent funding to all eligible school divisions and not solely on competitive grant programs.
3) Giving schools greater flexibility for using Title I funds to address persistent performance gaps, including allowing school divisions to flexibly supplement local funding where appropriate as well as reducing the number and amount of mandated fund set-asides.
4) Continued reliance on Title I formulas that allocate funding based on both a school division's overall poverty rate as well as on the division's absolute numbers of students in poverty.
5) Basing annual Title I, Part A allocations on the most recent and complete enrollment and free and reduced meals (FRM) data available and applying consistent definitions for FRM-eligible students across all schools and divisions, regardless of their participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program.

K. Title II

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

- Maintaining and increasing 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.

L. Title III

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

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

M. Other Federal Funding Issues

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Federal and state policies, laws, regulations, and procedures that promote and facilitate local access to and flexibility in the use of federal education-related funds.
2) Continuing adequate funding for at-risk youth programs; for quality after school and summer programs (21st

Century Community Learning Centers Initiative), for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (Title IV, Part A), and for Adult Education.

3) Additional federal funding aid to help address the needs of unaccompanied children who have been relocated to Fairfax County through the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement.
4) Continuing federal funding of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which helps serve children's health care needs in low-income households.
5) Continuing funding to support the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities identified under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including the provision of related services, training of personnel, and costs associated with maintaining 504 compliance.
6) Continuing federal funding under the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program to ensure student safety in traveling to and from school facilities.
7) Continuing federal grants to facilitate the transition to clean school buses.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Turning Title I, IDEA, or any other federal funding program into portable vouchers.
2) Arbitrary across-the-board cuts to, or federally imposed caps upon, education spending.
3) Restrictive interpretations of "supplement, not supplant" provisions for federal funding which infringe on a local school board's authority to set their own budget and staffing priorities.
4) Creating block grants that reduce the total funding available to school divisions for the programs placed under the block grant.
5) Rescission of federal funds legally appropriated by Congress.
6) Withholding of federal grant funding already allocated to local school divisions.

N. Other Federal Policy Issues

The Fairfax County School Board SUPPORTS:

1) Retaining current interpretation of the term "public benefit" in order to maintain broad access for all of our student populations to several programs and services administered by the U.S Department of Education (e.g. career and technical education and adult education), Health and Human Services (e.g. Head Start), and Agriculture (e.g. National School Lunch Program).
2) Continuing administration of all relevant preK-12 education related federal programming under the supervision of the federal Department of Education.
3) Restoring the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, Income Based Repayment (IBR) programs, and Grad PLUS loans, to the way they existed prior to congressional action in 2025 (H.R. 1, 119th Cong., Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72, 4 Jul 2025). These programs help students and educators pay for higher education — in the case of PSLF, providing student loan forgiveness in exchange for public education-related service time.
4) Updating the protections provided under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance, and repeal of the May 2020 rule.
5) Requiring all states to participate in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Next Generation Identification (NGI) Noncriminal Justice Rap Back Service.
6) Reclassifying menstrual products as eligible items for purchase with assistance from programs designed to help low-income families, including Medicaid, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children).
7) Ending the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) partnership with GreatSchools.org and discontinuing HUD's reliance on non-governmental aggregators of school quality data when providing information to housing assistance recipients.
8) A federal constitutional amendment guaranteeing equal rights to women.
9) Funding adequate and equitable federal programs to assist localities with public school construction, renovation, and major maintenance projects.
10) Comprehensive gun violence prevention legislation to help protect the health and safety of our students, families, and staff.

The Fairfax County School Board OPPOSES:

1) Intrusive federal mandates that are not adequately funded or that impose undue administrative burdens.
2) Efforts to undermine the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which guarantees educational stability and support for students experiencing homelessness by ensuring their immediate enrollment in school, access to transportation, and the services necessary to remove barriers to their academic success.