

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 218

Requesting the Department of Education to study the feasibility of implementing a program in the Commonwealth to track teacher turnover by developing exit questionnaires and other means. Report.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 25, 2015

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 24, 2015

WHEREAS, America's schools are struggling with a growing teacher dropout problem that is draining resources, diminishing teaching quality, and undermining our ability to close the student academic achievement gap; and

WHEREAS, high teacher turnover adversely affects public education in the Commonwealth while accountability for costs and reasons for teacher turnover go unreported to taxpayers and members of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) estimates that the annual cost of public school teacher turnover could be over \$7.3 billion nationwide; and

WHEREAS, this new estimate is significantly higher than the most recent estimate of \$4.9 billion in annual costs presented in a report by the Alliance for Excellent Education in 2005 and takes into account recent increases in the size of the teacher workforce and the rate of teacher turnover; and

WHEREAS, the NCTAF estimate, which is based on the cost generated by teachers who leave their school or district during a given year, does not include (i) the district's cost for teachers who move from school to school within a district in search of a better position or (ii) any federal or state investments that are lost when a teacher leaves the profession. Accordingly, if all of these costs were taken into account, the true cost to the nation would be far in excess of \$7 billion; and

WHEREAS, the attrition rate among public school teachers has grown by 50 percent over the past 15 years. Nationally, the annual teacher turnover rate has risen to 16.8 percent, while in urban schools the annual teacher turnover rate is over 20 percent, and in some schools and districts the teacher dropout rate is actually higher than the student dropout rate; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley warned the nation that we would need to hire two million teachers within 10 years to offset the retirement of teachers of the "Baby Boom" generation. Over the next decade, we exceeded that goal by hiring approximately 2.25 million teachers, but during that same decade 2.7 million teachers withdrew from public education, over 2.1 million of whom left the profession before their expected age of retirement; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has reported the retirement of record numbers of teachers, including individuals who choose to retire before reaching full retirement age; and

WHEREAS, on average, teachers today do not remain in the profession as long as previous generations of teachers did, and the attrition rate among new teachers has increased by more than 40 percent during the past 16 years; and

WHEREAS, because our school divisions have historically relied on a steady supply of new teachers, virtually no school division in the country has systems in place to track or control the teacher turnover rate; in the absence of systems of measurement, our school divisions have no way of knowing how much money they are losing, the caliber of teachers they are losing, or which schools are suffering the most adverse consequences of turnover; and

WHEREAS, because the odds of young teachers departing the profession are 184 percent higher than those of middle-aged teachers, the customary practice of continually hiring new teachers does not provide a reliable solution to the staffing challenges confronting our school divisions and undermines our efforts to improve teaching effectiveness; as the attrition rate of new teachers steadily increases, the country continues to pursue recruitment practices that place underprepared, inexperienced individuals alone in the classroom and often in the most challenging schools and classrooms; and

WHEREAS, it is worth noting that the increase in teacher turnover in the mid-1990s came at the same time that school divisions throughout the country increased efforts to expand the pool of potential teachers via alternative pathways into the profession, and, ironically, although the influx of more new teachers increased the speed of the revolving door into the teaching profession, the new teachers did not stabilize the teaching workforce and teaching quality in high-need schools did not measurably improve; and

WHEREAS, our leaders in public education are in need of clear, current, and accurate data on teacher turnover and its costs in formats that make it possible to analyze, manage, and control those costs as a first step toward reducing the turnover rate among our teachers and in order to make sound investments in teaching quality; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Department of Education be

requested to study the feasibility of implementing a program in the Commonwealth to track teacher turnover by developing exit questionnaires and other means.

In conducting its study, the Department of Education shall consider and make recommendations regarding (i) an exit questionnaire for teachers separating from service or choosing early retirement that includes reasons for leaving as a function of school climate, comparative salaries of neighboring school divisions, job demands as a reflection of teacher time, nonteaching duties, student behavior, classroom management, autonomy in the classroom, opportunities for growth and improvement, and health and family considerations in conjunction with (ii) use of the NCTAF Teacher Turnover Cost Calculator and its associated background information to estimate the dollars spent on teacher turnover for a specific school or school division in the Commonwealth or enable school leaders to design and conduct their own detailed teacher turnover cost analyses.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department for this study, upon request.

The Department shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2015, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2016 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.