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HOUSE BILL NO. 512

House Amendments in [] — February 12, 1996

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-199.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to programs designed to promote educational opportunities.*

Patrons—Van Landingham, Connally, Darner, Moran, Plum and Puller

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 22.1-199.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 22.1-199.1. Programs designed to promote educational opportunities.

A. The General Assembly finds that Virginia educational research supports the conclusion that poor children are more at risk of educational failure than children from more affluent homes and that reduced pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes result in improved academic performance among young children; to this end, the General Assembly establishes a long-term goal of reducing pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes for grades K through 3 in those schools in the Commonwealth with high or moderate concentrations of at-risk students.

Effective July 1, 1996, and with such funds as are provided in the appropriations act for this purpose, there is hereby established the statewide voluntary pupil-teacher ratio and class size reduction program for the purpose of reaching the long-term goal of statewide voluntary pupil-teacher ratio and class size reductions for grades K through 3 in schools with high or moderate concentrations of at-risk students, consistent with the provisions first provided during the 1994-1995 school year.

In order to facilitate these primary grade ratio and class size reductions, the Department of Education shall calculate the state funding of these voluntary ratio and class size reductions based on the incremental cost of providing the lower class sizes according to the greater of the division average per-pupil cost of all divisions or the actual division per-pupil cost. Localities shall provide matching funds for these voluntary ratio and class size reductions based on the composite index of local ability to pay. School divisions shall notify the Department of Education of their intention to implement the reduced ratios and class sizes in one or more of their qualifying schools by August 1 of each year. By March 31 of each year, school divisions shall forward data substantiating that each participating school has a complying pupil-teacher ratio.

In developing the proposed 1996-1998 biennium budget for public education, the Board of Education shall include funding for these ratios and class sizes. Effective July 1, 1996, the ratios and class sizes shall be included in the annual budget for public education.

B. The General Assembly finds that educational technology is one of the most important components, along with highly skilled teachers, in ensuring the delivery of quality public school education throughout the Commonwealth and, to this end, the following program is established. With such funds as are appropriated for this purpose, the Board of Education shall award to the several school divisions grants for expanded access to educational technology. Funding for educational technology training for instructional personnel shall be provided by the local school boards. Each qualifying school board shall establish an individualized technology plan, which shall be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, for integrating technology into the classroom and into schoolwide instructional programs. The grants shall be prioritized as follows:

1. In the 1994 biennium, the first priority for these funds shall be to automate the library media centers and provide network capabilities in Virginia's elementary, middle and high schools, or combination thereof, in order to ensure access to the statewide library and other information networks. If any elementary, middle or high school has already met this priority, the 1994 biennium grant shall be used to provide other educational technologies identified in the relevant division's approved technology plan, such as multimedia and telecomputing packages, integrated learning systems, laptop computer loan programs, vocational technology laboratories or other electronic techniques designed to enhance public education and to facilitate teacher training in and implementation of effective instructional technology. The Board shall also distribute, as provided in the appropriations act, funds to support the purchase of electronic reference materials for use in the statewide automated reference system.

2. In the 1996 biennium, the first priority for funding shall be consistent with [*those components of*] the Board of Education's revised six-year technology plan [*÷ this which focus on (i) retrofitting and upgrading existing school buildings to efficiently use educational technology; (ii) providing (a) one network-ready multimedia microcomputer for each classroom, (b) a five-to-one ratio of pupils to network-ready microcomputers, (c) graphic calculators and relevant scientific probes/sensors as required*

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60 *by the Standards of Learning, and (d) training and professional development on available technologies*
61 *and software to all levels and positions; and (iii) assisting school divisions in developing integrated*
62 *voice, video, and data-connectivity to local, national and international resources. This] funding may be*
63 *used to implement a local school division's long-range technology plan, at the discretion of the relevant*
64 *school board, if the local plan meets or exceeds the goals and standards of the Board's revised six-year*
65 *technology plan and has been approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.*

66 3. The Departments of Education, Information Technology, and General Services shall coordinate
67 master contracts for the purchase by local school boards of the aforementioned educational technologies
68 and reference materials.

69 C. The General Assembly finds that effective prevention programs designed to assist children at risk
70 of school failure and dropout are practical mechanisms for reducing violent and criminal activity and for
71 ensuring that Virginia's children will reach adulthood with the skills necessary to succeed in the
72 twenty-first century; to this end, the following program is hereby established. With such funds as are
73 appropriated for this purpose, the General Assembly hereby establishes a grant program to be disbursed
74 by the Department of Education to schools and community-based organizations to provide quality
75 preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds who are unserved by another such program. The grants
76 shall be used to provide full-day and at least school-year programs for at-risk four-year-old children that
77 include quality preschool education, health services, social services, parental involvement, and
78 transportation. The Department of Education, in cooperation with such other state agencies which may
79 coordinate child day care and early childhood programs, shall establish guidelines for quality preschool
80 education and criteria for the service components, consistent with the findings of the November 1993
81 study by the Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Council on Child Day Care and
82 Early Childhood Programs. During the 1995-96 fiscal year, the Board of Education shall, with such
83 funds as are appropriated for this purpose, distribute grants, based on an allocation formula providing
84 the state share of the grant per child, as specified in the appropriations act, for thirty percent of the
85 unserved at-risk four-year-olds in the Commonwealth pursuant to the funding provided in the
86 appropriations act. During the 1996-97 fiscal year, grants shall be distributed, with such funds as are
87 appropriated for this purpose, based on an allocation formula providing the state share of the grant per
88 child, as specified in the appropriations act, for sixty percent of the unserved at-risk four-year-olds in the
89 Commonwealth, such sixty percent to be calculated by adding services for thirty percent more of the
90 unserved at-risk children to the thirty percent of unserved at-risk children in each locality provided
91 funding in the appropriations act.

92 In order for a locality to qualify for these grants, the local governing body shall commit to providing
93 the required matching funds, based on the composite index of local ability to pay. Localities may use,
94 for the purposes of meeting the local match, local expenditures for existing qualifying programs and
95 shall also continue to pursue and coordinate other funding sources, including child care subsidies. Funds
96 received through this program shall be used to supplement, not supplant, any funds currently provided
97 for preschool programs within the locality.

98 D. The General Assembly finds that local autonomy in making decisions on local educational needs
99 and priorities results in effective grass-roots efforts to improve education in the Commonwealth's public
100 schools only when coupled with sufficient state funding; to this end, the following block grant program
101 is hereby established. With such funds as are provided in the appropriations act, the Department of
102 Education shall distribute block grants to localities to enable compliance with the Commonwealth's
103 requirements for school divisions in effect on January 1, 1995. Therefore, for the purpose of such
104 compliance, the block grant herein established shall consist of a sum equal to the amount appropriated
105 in the appropriations act for the covered programs, including the at-risk add-on program; dropout
106 prevention, specifically Project YES; Project Discovery; English as a second language programs,
107 including programs for overage, nonschooled students; Advancement Via Individual Determination
108 (AVID); the Homework Assistance Program; programs initiated under the Virginia Guaranteed
109 Assistance Program, except that such funds shall not be used to pay any college expenses of
110 participating students; Reading Recovery; and school/community health centers. Each school board may
111 use any funds received through the block grant to implement the covered programs and other programs
112 designed to save the Commonwealth's children from educational failure.