

1998 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 142

Offered January 26, 1998

Expressing the sense of the General Assembly that the Commonwealth support direct funding for school construction.

Patron—Phillips

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, a 1991 report of the American Association of School Administrators indicated that nearly one-third of the nation's 110,000 public schools were built before World War II, and many more schools constructed in the 1950s and 1960s to accommodate the "baby boom" were designed to last no longer than 30 years; and

WHEREAS, the construction, maintenance, and financing of school facilities have received renewed focus in recent years as a number of courts have ruled that inequities in school funding mechanisms can result in dilapidated school facilities and hazardous building conditions; and

WHEREAS, testimony before the Commission on Infrastructure (HJR 135 - 1996) has indicated that school division use of temporary classrooms, such as trailers, is increasing, with 45 percent of Virginia school divisions using a total of 3,621 mobile classrooms; and

WHEREAS, according to the Virginia Department of Education's 1995-96 School Facility Status Survey, the Commonwealth's school divisions will require over six billion dollars in the next five years to meet maintenance and capital improvement needs, but school divisions anticipate a \$2.2 billion shortfall in meeting these needs; and

WHEREAS, most states provide financial support for school construction through full state support, equalization grants, matching grants, flat grants, building authorities, bond banks, and state loans, and a number of states provide grant-in-aid assistance to school divisions for facility construction and maintenance; and

WHEREAS, the rising costs of real estate and construction have proven unduly burdensome for some school divisions that may need to construct or renovate several school facilities; and

WHEREAS, the need for new facilities is likely to grow, reflecting increased population growth enrollment projections, the aging of existing school facilities, and state mandates that may necessitate enlarged or improved facilities to accommodate class size or specific programs; and

WHEREAS, although current funding mechanisms for public schools in the Commonwealth, such as the Literary Fund and the Virginia Public School Authority, have aided many school divisions in constructing facilities that promote educational opportunities and provide an atmosphere conducive to learning, direct assistance from the Commonwealth is necessary to address the pressing construction and renovation demands of our school divisions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Commonwealth provide direct funding to support the construction and renovation demands of its public schools to provide an educational environment conducive to learning.

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HJ142