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HOUSE BILL NO. 1513

Offered January 13, 1999

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A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-199.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to funding educational programs for at-risk students.

Patron—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 appropriation 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. Therefore, the Board of Education shall strive to incorporate technological studies within the teaching of all disciplines. Further, the General Assembly notes that education technology can only be successful if teachers and administrators are provided adequate training and assistance. 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 as set forth in the appropriation act, including funds for providing a technology resource assistant to serve every elementary school in this Commonwealth beginning on July 1, 1998. Any local school board accepting these funds to hire such technology resource assistants shall commit to providing the required matching funds, based on the composite index of local ability to pay. 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.

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60 The Board shall also distribute, as provided in the appropriation act, funds to support the purchase of
61 electronic reference materials for use in the statewide automated reference system.

62 2. In the 1996 biennium, the first priority for funding shall be consistent with those components of
63 the Board of Education's revised six-year technology plan which focus on (i) retrofitting and upgrading
64 existing school buildings to efficiently use educational technology; (ii) providing (a) one network-ready
65 multimedia microcomputer for each classroom, (b) a five-to-one ratio of pupils to network-ready
66 microcomputers, (c) graphing calculators and relevant scientific probes/sensors as required by the
67 Standards of Learning, and (d) training and professional development on available technologies and
68 software to all levels and positions; and (iii) assisting school divisions in developing integrated voice,
69 video, and data-connectivity to local, national and international resources. This funding may be used to
70 implement a local school division's long-range technology plan, at the discretion of the relevant school
71 board, if the local plan meets or exceeds the goals and standards of the Board's revised six-year
72 technology plan and has been approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

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

76 4. Beginning on July 1, 1998, a technology replacement program shall be, with such funds as may be
77 appropriated for this purpose, implemented to replace obsolete educational hardware and software. As
78 provided in § 22.1-129 D, school boards may donate obsolete educational technology hardware and
79 software which is being replaced. Any such donations shall be offered to other school divisions and to
80 preschool programs in the Commonwealth.

81 5. Consistent with school board policies designed to improve school-community communications and
82 guidelines for providing instructional assistance in the home, each school division shall strive to
83 establish a voice mail communication system after regular school hours for parents, families, and
84 teachers by the year 2000.

85 C. The General Assembly finds that effective prevention programs designed to assist children at risk
86 of school failure and dropout are practical mechanisms for reducing violent and criminal activity and for
87 ensuring that Virginia's children will reach adulthood with the skills necessary to succeed in the
88 twenty-first century; to this end, the following program is hereby established. With such funds as are
89 appropriated for this purpose, the General Assembly hereby establishes a grant program to be disbursed
90 by the Department of Education to schools and community-based organizations to provide quality
91 preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds who are unserved by Head Start programs and for
92 five-year-olds who are not eligible to attend kindergarten.

93 The grants shall be used to provide at least half-day services for the length of the school year for
94 at-risk four-year-old children who are unserved by Head Start programs and for five-year-olds who are
95 not eligible to attend kindergarten. The services shall include quality preschool education, health
96 services, social services, parental involvement including activities to promote family literacy, and
97 transportation. The Department of Education, in cooperation with such other state agencies which may
98 coordinate child day care and early childhood programs, shall establish guidelines for quality preschool
99 education and criteria for the service components, consistent with the findings of the November 1993
100 study by the Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Council on Child Day Care and
101 Early Childhood Programs. School divisions may apply for and be granted waivers from these guidelines
102 by the Department of Education.

103 During the 1995-96 fiscal year, the Board of Education shall, with such funds as are appropriated for
104 this purpose, distribute grants, based on an allocation formula providing the state share of the grant per
105 child, as specified in the appropriation act, for thirty percent of the unserved at-risk four-year-olds in the
106 Commonwealth pursuant to the funding provided in the appropriation act. During the 1996-97 fiscal year
107 and thereafter, grants shall be distributed, with such funds as are appropriated for this purpose, based on
108 an allocation formula providing the state share of the grant per child, as specified in the appropriation
109 act, for at least sixty percent of the unserved at-risk four-year-olds and five-year-olds who are not
110 eligible to attend kindergarten in the Commonwealth, such sixty percent to be calculated by adding
111 services for thirty percent more of the unserved at-risk children to the thirty percent of unserved at-risk
112 children in each locality provided funding in the appropriation act.

113 *During the 1999-2000 fiscal year and thereafter, grants shall be distributed, with such funds as are*
114 *appropriated for this purpose, based on an allocation formula providing the state share of the grant per*
115 *child, as specified in the appropriation act, for 100 percent of the unserved at-risk four-year-olds and*
116 *five-year-olds who are not eligible to attend kindergarten in the Commonwealth, such 100 percent to be*
117 *calculated by adding services for forty percent more of the unserved at-risk children to the sixty percent*
118 *of unserved at-risk children in each locality provided funding in the appropriation act.*

119 ~~Local~~ *If state funds are insufficient to support 100 percent of the unserved at-risk four-year-olds and*
120 *five-year-olds who are not eligible to attend kindergarten in the Commonwealth, local school boards*
121 *may elect to serve more than sixty percent of the provide services for such remaining at-risk*

four-year-olds *and five-year-olds* and may use federal funds or local funds for this expansion or may seek funding through this grant program for such purposes. ~~Grants~~ *If state funds are insufficient to support the 100 percent goal, grants* may be awarded; ~~if funds are available in excess of the funding for the sixty percent allocation,~~ to expand services ~~to for such~~ at-risk four-year-olds ~~beyond the sixty percent goal and five-year-olds to the extent such state funding is available.~~

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

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

E. In order to reduce pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes in elementary schools, from such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose, each school board may employ additional classroom teachers, remedial teachers, and reading specialists for each of its elementary schools over the requirements of the Standards of Quality. State and local funding for such additional classroom teachers, remedial teachers, and reading specialists shall be apportioned as provided in the appropriation act.