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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 294

Offered January 13, 2021

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the true cost of education in the Commonwealth and provide an accurate assessment of the costs to implement the Standards of Quality. Report.

Patrons—Lewis and McClellan

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, under Article VIII, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia, ultimate responsibility for public education rests with the General Assembly, which is specifically charged with the duties of establishing a public school system and striving to ensure its quality; and

WHEREAS, the Standards of Quality, prescribed by the Board of Education and revised only by the General Assembly, establish minimum educational goals and requirements; and

WHEREAS, the cost of such Standards of Quality and how that cost is shared between the state and the localities is determined by the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Standards of Quality funding formula has undergone several changes in the past decade and may no longer reflect the actual costs schools face in educating Virginia's children; and

WHEREAS, many school divisions in the Commonwealth exceed the minimum educational goals and requirements of the Standards of Quality; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly must take into account the actual cost of education in the Commonwealth in order to ensure a high-quality education program and a fair balance of costs between the state and the localities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the true cost of education in the Commonwealth and provide an accurate assessment of the costs to implement the Standards of Quality.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall (i) estimate the cost of implementing the Standards of Quality based on the actual expense of education prevailing in the Commonwealth; (ii) determine if the Standards of Quality accurately reflect actual standards of practice within each school division; (iii) analyze changes in the Standards of Quality funding formula since 2009 and the impact of such changes on its accuracy in reflecting such costs; (iv) recommend changes to the Standards of Quality funding formula to ensure that state support is neither inadequate nor excessive; and (v) consider any other funding issues and make any other recommendations it deems relevant.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission by the Department of Education. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2021, and for the second year by November 30, 2022, and the Director shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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