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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 53

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 10, 2024

*Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the effect of salaries, employment benefits, and other relevant factors on teacher recruitment and retention. Report.*

Patron—Batten

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the maintenance of a high-quality teacher workforce that is large enough to adequately serve the educational needs of the Commonwealth is paramount to fulfilling the General Assembly's constitutional obligation, pursuant to Article VIII, Section I of the Constitution of Virginia, to ensure the maintenance of a high-quality education program in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Virginia is experiencing an ongoing teacher shortage, with the percentage of vacant teaching positions in public elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth increasing from 3.9 percent to 4.8 percent between the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years and the percentage of teachers who are not fully licensed increasing from 14 percent to 16 percent between the 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 school years; and

WHEREAS, the severity of the teacher shortage is greatest in high-poverty and rural school divisions, with data from the Department of Education for the 2021-2022 school year indicating that schools with the highest share of students experiencing poverty have a teacher vacancy rate that is nearly 50 percent higher than the rate for schools serving the lowest share of students experiencing poverty and a provisional licensure rate that is on average 75 percent higher than that of schools serving the lowest share of students experiencing poverty; and

WHEREAS, financial burdens associated with teaching, including lack of competitive pay, tuition and fees, and costs associated with licensure assessments, are a significant factor in poor teacher recruitment and retention rates and Virginia is failing to keep pace with the national growth in average teacher pay and the growth in average teacher pay in neighboring states; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the effect of salaries, employment benefits, and other relevant factors on teacher recruitment and retention. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall identify adjustments to be made in relation to those factors to improve teacher recruitment and retention in the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall:

1. Evaluate teacher salaries, employment benefits, and other financial benefits or incentives available to teachers at each local school division;

2. Identify any disparities in teacher salaries, employment benefits, and other financial benefits or incentives available to teachers in relation to teacher recruitment and retention rates between schools in high-poverty or rural school divisions, schools in high-income school divisions, and the Commonwealth on average;

3. Conduct a review of the salaries, employment benefits, and other financial benefits or incentives available to teachers in relation to the rates of teacher recruitment and retention and the numbers of fully licensed teachers in adjoining states and the District of Columbia; and

4. Identify factors that positively impact the recruitment and retention of high-quality, fully licensed teachers.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission by each local school division and 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 by November 30, 2024, and the chairman 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 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The 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 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 and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.