



THE
COMMONWEALTH
INSTITUTE

*Building a Prosperous
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 26, 2017

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State Cuts Mean Fewer Staff and Resources for Virginia Students

New report documents challenges from Virginia teachers and administrators all over the state in trying to do more for students with less support from state lawmakers

Richmond, VA -- Reduced state investment in public schools in Virginia since the recession has significantly impacted day-to-day operations in schools and forced schools to cut back on critical education positions and programs. A new report from The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, an economic and policy research organization in Richmond, documents these impacts in six school divisions across the state.

The report finds that schools have eliminated teachers and instructional specialists, placed increasing responsibilities on teachers, reduced critical support positions such as nurses and school counselors, not kept pace with the changing language needs of students, eliminated student clubs and shortened after school programs, and allowed facilities to deteriorate and fall into disrepair. Schools made these difficult decisions in order to balance their budget as the state reduced financial support.

The report summarizes the findings from focus groups with teachers and administrators in Brunswick County, Fredericksburg City, Norfolk City, Richmond City, Rockingham County, and Wise County and connects these experiences with data collected by Virginia's Department of Education to better understand the array of challenges Virginia schools face.

"These experiences from instructors around the state show that years of the state cutting corners to balance the budget has finally caught up with teachers and schools trying to do more with less," says Chris Duncombe, a policy analyst with the Institute and co-author of the study. "This is not a recipe for success. By supporting our schools at a level far below what it takes to meet growing needs, we put our children and our future workforce in a precarious position."

Statewide, state support has fallen 11 percent per student since 2009 in real dollars. This has impacted the ability of schools to maintain staffing and facilities. Across the state, schools

divisions have about 2,800 fewer staff than they had in 2009, despite growing student enrollment. If they had kept pace with enrollment growth, Virginia schools would have 10,400 more staff instructing students and making sure schools run smoothly. Schools have also cut back on the operation and maintenance of facilities spending 8 percent less per student. Meanwhile, the number of English learners has increased by over 50 percent growing by over 54,000 students since 2009.

The report endorses proposals from Virginia's Board of Education, which were adopted by the Board and sent to lawmakers last November. The amendments would undo some of the harmful cuts made during the recession and ensure Virginia schools have adequate staffing for critical positions such as principals, assistant principals, school counselors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and other support staff.

"It's time for lawmakers to adequately support Virginia schools and commit to investing in our future," says Duncombe.

The full report, *Demonstrated Harm: Cuts to School Funding are Impacting Virginia Classrooms*, is available online at www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org.

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The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent, and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org for more information.