

NO MORE NON-CENTS! FUND OUR SCHOOLS

Sample Form Letters Contact Your Legislators to Advocate for Education!

Visit our Advocacy Website for our Advocacy Toolkit and more resources!

www.rvaschools.net/advocacy

It's time to advocate with the Virginia General Assembly to fund our schools! The House and Senate will be considering many important bills and negotiating a state budget in the coming weeks. Your voice is needed to encourage legislators to make equitable funding and meaningful education funding reform a priority!

Sample Form Letters

Sample form letters on several topics that RPS has prioritized through our Legislative Agenda are found on the following pages. You can send them to legislators as-is after adding legislators' names or you can personalize your message with your own views or requests of legislators. It is always best to customize and write your own letters with more information about yourself and why these issues (or other issues) are important to you.

Contact Information for Legislators

- You can find your Delegate and Senator, and their contact information [here](#).
- Additional contact info for all legislators is found by clicking their names [here](#). Important legislators to contact include those on the following committees:
 - [House Education Committee](#)
 - [House Appropriations Committee](#) & [Elementary & Secondary Education Subcommittee](#)
 - [Senate Education and Health Committee](#)
 - [Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee](#) & [K-12 Education Subcommittee](#)

Don't Forget Phone Calls!

Call their Capitol offices and provide a quick position statement for the secretary or legislative assistant to write down for the legislator. Sample calls:

- "Hello, my name is ____ and I'm calling to ask Senator ____ to advocate for the Equity Fund proposed by the Virginia Board of Education."
- "Hi, my name is ____ and I'm a constituent of Delegate _____. I'm calling to ask Delegate ____ to vote for the Equity Fund to provide more support to our schools that need the most help."

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The Equity Fund

The biggest legislative priority for RPS is creating the Equity Fund. This new fund would combine existing state funds for the At-Risk Add-On program with another pool of funds called Prevention, Intervention, and Remediation funds. The Virginia Board of Education proposed creating this fund and investing additional funding in the state budget. School divisions would be directed to spend the funds in schools with the greatest concentrations of poverty. This new fund would begin to modernize our education funding formulas by recognizing that each child and each school are not the same and that funding should equitably reflect their needs.

This issue will ultimately be decided by the [House Appropriations Committee](#) and [Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee](#) as they craft the state budget. While you should always contact your own legislators to express your views on legislation, you should also contact all the members of those committees.

Example 1 - Equity-Based Funding

SUBJECT: Support the Equity Fund

Dear Delegate/Senator LAST NAME,

My name is _____ and I am a student/parent/teacher/etc. in Richmond Public Schools. I am writing to seek your support in establishing the Equity Fund. This proposal and the advancement of equity-based funding models is critical to the success of students from disadvantaged communities. On top of the prior lack of equitable funding, COVID-19 has deepened the disparities between high-poverty and wealthier communities. Now is the time to invest in our students of color and create the Equity Fund or advance other equity-based funding for our students. Please encourage your colleagues to advance and fund this proposal from the Virginia Board of Education.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Address

Richmond, Virginia 232##

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Example 2 - Equity-Based Funding

SUBJECT: Support the Equity Fund

Dear Delegate/Senator LAST NAME,

My name is _____ and I am a *student/parent/teacher/etc.* in Richmond Public Schools. As the General Assembly advances education legislation and decides on how to fund our schools, I ask you to create the Equity Fund proposed by the Board of Education. Current funding formulas do not account for poverty and the socioeconomic status of our students. Research shows that Virginia's high-poverty school divisions are spending \$6,600 less than what is needed to meet national average outcomes on standardized tests. Investing in our students is critical to fix this financial gap and give our school divisions the tools they need to help our students. It is time for Virginia to make equity-based funding a reality. Please encourage your colleagues to advance and fund this proposal.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Address

Richmond, Virginia 232##

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EL Teacher Ratios

Another significant priority is implementation of a new, more equitable approach to English Learner student to teacher ratios. The current flat ratio of 1 teacher to 50 students does not adequately serve their needs. The Board of Education recommended changing the ratios to a proficiency-based scale, where less English proficient students would have a ratio of 1:25 and more proficient students would have ratios ranging from 30-58 students per teacher. This policy would equitably distribute EL teachers to the EL students who need the most support.

Example 3 - English Learner Teacher Ratios

SUBJECT: English Learner Teacher Funding

Dear Delegate/Senator LAST NAME,

My name is _____ and I am a *student/parent/teacher/etc.* in Richmond Public Schools. I would like to express my support for providing further support to our English Learner (EL) students by amending the staffing requirements for EL teachers. Currently, there is only one teacher per 50 EL students. Amending the staffing requirements to be based on student proficiency level, instead of a flat ratio, would more equitably support the needs of our EL students. This proficiency-based proposal was recommended to you by the Virginia Board of Education. These leaders have helped identify how to address equity and I hope you can see why equity is a necessity in a system where many individuals do not have the opportunity to share the same starting line. I am looking forward to seeing a more inclusive learning environment which celebrates diversity. Please encourage your colleagues to advance and fund this proposal.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Address

Richmond, Virginia 232##

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COVID Impacts

Local and state budgets have had severe impacts from COVID-19. It is critical that our state government continue to support school divisions. How did COVID-19 impact you, your student, or your community? Consider customizing this letter to share your story.

Example 4 - COVID Impacts & Enrollment Loss

SUBJECT: Support Education Funding During COVID-19

Dear Delegate/Senator LAST NAME,

As a *student/parent/teacher/etc. (in/of)* Richmond Public Schools, I am deeply concerned about the potential funding decrease due to the impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has significantly changed our everyday lives and severely impacted our students' learning. I am writing to you in hope that you will support maintaining funding provisions pre-COVID enrollment decline and ensure that our students, staff, and families continue to have their needs met. It is imperative that we continue to invest in our students, staff, and families. More than ever we look to you, our representatives for support of our needs in these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

John Doe
Address
Richmond, Virginia 232##