

For Immediate Release

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Public Health Emergency Highlights the Needs of Our Students in Under-resourced Communities

As the coronavirus crisis opens so many facets of our communities, the Fund Our Schools coalition is encouraged by the outpouring of support we see for students and families by committed educators, school staff, and selfless volunteers throughout the state. With so many needs, from childcare to food access to the increasing need for medical attention, education for so many of our students has been put on the backburner. This is the case particularly in our least-resourced school divisions with the highest share of students that currently live in poverty. Students who face the most barriers -- those without access to high speed internet, devices or books to learn with, or even the most basic amenities such as adequate food and heat -- face harrowing challenges to continue their education at this time. Students with disabilities and English Learners also face added barriers to learning at home without the supplementary services they need to be successful.

This crisis has drawn into sharp focus Virginia lawmakers' long history of policy choices to underinvest in so many of our state's safety-net and education systems. Communities of color, immigrants, and other groups with less access to financial wealth and resources [to weather this crisis](#) have long been harmed by these deliberate underinvestments. As a result, these groups remain the most at risk of facing a longer and harsher recovery in the aftermath of this crisis. The sad reality remains: When students with less access to resources eventually return to the classroom, they will likely be even further behind their more-resourced peers than before the crisis, and will be returning to schools with less financial support than the schools with more students from high-income families.

To that end, we understand that state policymakers have many critical and highly consequential choices on the road ahead. Choices made in the years following the Great Recession contributed to the largest cuts to Virginia school divisions with the highest share of students of color and students living in households with low income. To this day, we are trying to recover from these harmful cuts. Our path out of this crisis doesn't have to result in the same inequitable policy decisions and outcomes made over a decade ago. It is our hope that state lawmakers will leverage our state's significant resources during this trying time to both support families most in need to get by in the short term, and to equitably invest in students who will need significant support in the long term to make up for lost learning during this crisis.

Over the coming weeks, months, and year, Fund Our Schools will be sharing resources for schools, students, and families, along with policy solutions to help meet educators' and

students' most pressing needs. More than ever in this difficult time, as well as in the recovery ahead, we remain committed to our mission of working towards a Virginia where every student has the opportunity to attain a high-quality public education.

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About the Fund Our Schools Coalition

Fund Our Schools envisions a Virginia where every student has the opportunity to attain a high-quality public education. Led by the **Legal Aid Justice Center**, **The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis**, **New Virginia Majority**, **Virginia Educators United**, and **Virginia Excels**, the Fund Our Schools campaign is a growing coalition of advocacy groups, parents, teachers, and students that demands the Commonwealth prioritize student needs and fully fund Virginia's K-12 schools.

With adequate investments through the state budget, Virginia can make educational opportunity a reality that lifts every individual student to new heights and, with them, the communities they live in. The priorities of the Fund Our Schools coalition are:

- sufficient staffing to provide students the instructional, social, and emotional support to be successful;
- fair funding in order to meet the needs of every student in every zip code; and
- just compensation and supports for educators in order to recruit and retain a diverse workforce of highly qualified educators so that every Virginia student has a meaningful opportunity to learn.

www.FundOurSchoolsVA.org

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