



County of Fairfax, Virginia

Supervisor Pat Herrity
Budget Consideration Item – FY2024
April 28, 2023
Reduce School Transfer

Background: In each of the last two years, I have proposed reducing the school transfer by approximately \$100M due to an analysis of student population levels and some fairly obvious over projections of several non-personnel accounts. In the FY 2022 budget, my assertions on the student population were correct and the schools took a reduction in the following year's budget for these. In addition, a quick look at the carryover balances for each of those two years shows that carryover balances have grown by over \$100 million in each of the last two years. The amount of "assigned" carryover grew from \$124M in FY 2021 to \$215M in FY 2022. These "assigned" funds represent uncommitted requests from schools, most of which have not been thoroughly reviewed or approved.

A review of the FY 2024 proposed school budget by spending category also clearly shows some unexplained increases. In the Materials and Supplies line alone, the school budget proposes spending \$28M more for FY 2023 and FY 2024 than in the previous three years combined. Yes, \$28M more in two years than the previous three years. There are several other accounts in which similar anomalies exist. An overall look at increases over historical trends show \$500M more than pre-pandemic average spending despite a decrease in student population. Despite the size and importance of the FCPS budget, no other Board members or School Board members have asked critical questions about these inaccuracies. At this point, I am waiting for FCPS to answer my questions on these budget anomalies.

The FY 2024 proposed school budget request also includes a significant increase in administrative positions despite the reduction in the number of students. These increases are in both central office positions and school based, including an additional 17 assistant principals. Our teachers' number one complaint is the increase in administrative burden that keeps them from teaching. Despite the overall decrease in student population, central office positions have increased. This increases the burdens on both teachers and on taxpayers. Despite an overinvestment in administrative positions, teacher attrition and student achievement gaps continue to be concerns. FCPS SAT scores have fallen 27 points while the rest of Virginia has increased by 14 points.

The FY 2024 proposed school budget request also includes \$65.2M for an additional student population of 2,382 at a cost of over \$27K per student. Interestingly, when the student population was reduced, the

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savings were shown at \$16K per student. This difference has not been adequately explained. These projections have not been adequately reviewed and have been overstated in nine of the last 11 years.

Consideration item: Because of the unexplained projected increases in budget accounts described above, the growth in administrative positions without an explanation of how they reduce teachers' administrative burdens, and the disparity of the cost of additional students versus the decreasing student population, I propose a reduction in the school transfer of \$100M for FY 2024.

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