

Good Morning. My name is Dorothy Walton and I am a resident of the City of Charlottesville. I retired from the Charlottesville City School system in 2016 after 38 years of teaching in public schools. I currently have a seat on the Virginia Education Association Board of Directors representing VEA's retired members.

Governor Youngkin campaigned promising the biggest education spending package ever, but his budget fails to prioritize schools, spending extraordinarily little of VA's available resources on K-12.

Instead, Youngkin's biggest priority was a \$1 billion tax giveaway to profitable corporations.

As you well know, when corporations are deciding whether to locate in a state, they always inquire about the status of the state's public schools.

Here are some current facts regarding VA's public schools:

- In 2018-19, there were 877 unfilled teaching positions. In 2021-22 it rose to 2,594.
- VA's teachers are paid on average just 67 cents per dollar compared to similar educated peers in other professions.

- VA ranks 25th when comparing its Teacher Pay Average of \$58,506 to the National Teacher Pay Average of \$65,293. That's a difference of \$6,787.
- VA remains on the bottom tier for state per student spending, hovering between low-resource states like Mississippi and Louisiana.

Despite VA having among the least competitive teacher pay in the country and severe staffing shortages that both internal and external surveys tell us is primarily caused by inadequate pay, Governor Youngkin chose not to invest anything in school salary adjustments. His budget only included a mere \$45 million for a one-time 1% bonus for certain school staff this August and a divisive \$50 million for performance-pay bonuses for teachers. According to a recent large scale EdWeek survey, teachers reported that bonuses don't incentivize them to stay in teaching.

At a time of major staffing shortages, we need prudent investments that improve retention. A reasonable starting place would be a 6% pay increase this year for state supported K-12 employees costing just \$327

million – a fraction of Governor Youngkin’s tax cuts. This would get VA to the national teacher pay average, a low bar for a relatively rich and high-cost state like ours.

While Youngkin’s budget includes \$422 million in new education spending due mostly to automatic updates in enrollment and sales tax, the total available resources over the budget cycle exceeded \$4 billion. Youngkin’s education investment only represents 10%. For perspective, normally a third of our budget goes to education spending. A typical expenditure for education based on available resource should have been closer to \$1.3 billion.

Governor Youngkin’s budget is a major missed opportunity to make meaningful progress on addressing our education challenges. I implore our lawmakers to come back and fix this budget and seriously address our school challenges.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today.

