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Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Joint Board of Supervisors & School Board Committee, Monday, November 18, 2024

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- Agenda (Granicus): https://loudoun.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=73&clip_id=7819

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[00:08:10] All right. Good evening. I would like to call to order the November 18th, 2024 Joint Board of Supervisors and School Board Committee meeting. This room has a hearing loop. If you need hearing assistance, switch your hearing aids to telecoil mode. If you need a headset, we have those available as well. Please lead the clerk to my left at the end of the dais to request one.

[00:08:35] We'll start with the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic of which it stands, a nation, under God, visible, liberty, and justice for all.

[00:08:56] All right, we're going to start with public input. Today we have nine, I think nine, advanced speakers signed up, so we're going to limit speaking to two minutes. Usually we allow two and a half, but because we have nine, we're going to limit it to two minutes for our public input portion of the meeting.

[00:09:18] If there is anybody in the room that would like to address the committee and has not already signed up to speak, please see the clerk, although I think we're going to limit it to nine. Members of the public who wish to speak will be allotted the two minutes. When your name is called, please make your way to either podium and state your name for the public record.

[00:09:37] When your time has expired, please yield the floor to the next speaker. All right, we will start with Kathleen Moran. Hello, Ms. Moran.

[00:09:52] Good afternoon. I'm Katherine Moran and I'm here as a mother, a teacher, and a staunch advocate for students with disabilities. My 21-year-old daughter is in her last year of public education eligibility, so I speak not just from my professional expertise, but my personal experience and where we are right at this moment in our family.

[00:10:15] I am proud to be a CAS teacher within Loudoun County Public Schools, working with our 18 to 22-year-old population, workforce development, and independent living focus. I was hired by LCPS to manage the career assessment center that was housed at Monroe Tech Center, and unfortunately, that center no longer operates because a small group of individuals failed to recognize its immense value.

[00:10:44] We cannot let that kind of oversight happen again. Establishing the LCPS Transition Center is not just a necessity. It's an investment in our students, our economy, and our community. Allow me to explain. Educating and assessing students in secondary education, rather than relying on adult services, provides three critical benefits.

[00:11:07] Early insight and intervention, cost savings, and workforce development. These students are an untapped workforce. With proper training and assessment, they will meet the needs of local employers who are struggling to find skilled workers. There are some key statistics that I'll try to shoot out: students with disabilities who receive transition services in high school are two and a half times more likely to be employed after graduation. Transition programs that include vocational training, job coaching, and internships lead to an 86 percent increase in employment outcomes compared to those who do not receive these services. This is an opportunity to build a legacy for our community. Thank you. Thank you. Zane Khan. Zane Khan. Followed by Shanaz Khan.

[00:11:43] to an 86 percent increase in employment outcomes compared to those who do not receive these services. This is an opportunity to build a legacy for our community. Thank you. Thank you. Zane Khan. Zane Khan. Followed by Shanaz Khan.

[00:12:06] Shanaz Khan. Sorry. I am Ms. Zane Khan. I am 50 years old. Go to Rockbridge High School.

[00:12:37] I love to watch citizens' kids, my whole family, love, silence, but I want to be a silence too, when I grew up, me, have, now, so, now, I'm ready to work and make money, but that will, I grew up, thank you.

[00:13:16] I'm about to just translate that for him so that he could understand. Hi, my name is Zane Khan. I am 15 years old. I go to Rockridge High School. I love to watch Sid the Science Kid. My whole family loves science, and I want to be a scientist too when I grow up. I need help now so that I am ready to work and make money by myself when I grow up. Thank you.

[00:13:41] Thank you. Did you want to speak next? Yeah, I'm next. Thank you. Yep. Good afternoon, members of the Board of Supervisors and members of the school board. My name is Shanaz Khan, and I'm here to express my strong support for establishing a dedicated transition center for students with disabilities.

[00:14:04] Transitioning from high school to adulthood is a crucial time for all students, especially those with disabilities who face unique challenges. A dedicated transition center would provide job training, life skills, and community resources to help these students, like my son, live more independently and successfully.

[00:14:20] However, we need your support to secure space to make this vision a reality. LCPS currently has seven sites, referred to as CAST, Community and Schools Together, that offer a post-high school program in the community for students with an IEP ages 18 to 22 who meet the criteria for acceptance into the program.

[00:14:40] CAS has limited spots available, serving only 8 to 10 students per site. The other post-high school program currently in LCPS is Project SEARCH, which has approximately 10 seats each year. Together, these programs serve only roughly 100 students, despite the county having over 10,000 students with disabilities enrolled.

[00:14:59] Many students are left without support after graduation, leaving them unprepared for further education, employment, or independent living. Transition planning for all students with an IEP 14 to 22 is essential. I have served on SEAC Transition Subcommittee for nine years and can say that this model does not meet the needs of our students with disabilities.

[00:15:20] I've worked with three different LCPS administrations, all of whom have tried to improve the system without success. The SEAC, the Special Education Advisory Committee, continues to hear the lack of transition services across the county and the lack of consistency our existing models provide.

[00:15:38] I envision Loudoun County leading the way by establishing a recognized transition center that brings all the existing programs together. This hub would provide a safe, inclusive environment and would ensure equal access and consistent delivery of transition services for all students with disabilities.

[00:15:56] Please make our vision a reality. Thank you, Ms. Kahn. Liz Crotty, followed by Carla Sola. Good afternoon. I am here to share with you that our community of students with disabilities has absolute needs that are not currently being addressed.

[00:16:16] CIEC has been advocating for a transition center and inclusive playgrounds because our students often do not have access to facilities and opportunities that other students in LCPS do. A transition center will prepare our students to live a more independent and fulfilling life through meaningful employment.

[00:16:34] This time in public school is our best opportunity to provide students with the education and training that they need. I will explain what we envision using my kids as examples. My oldest is 13 years old. She wants to be a kindergarten teacher. She has many gifts. She's clever and inquisitive and loves kids, but she struggles with executive functioning and has a mild muscle disorder. A vocational evaluator can help identify potential areas of challenge and put together a plan early on in high school to work on those skills. She can then go through one of our excellent teacher cadet programs that is already in existence, but she will likely need support from special educators throughout to help her figure out systems to help her stay organized,

[00:17:14] an occupational therapist to help her problems solve difficulties she may encounter. My other daughter is 10 and has an intellectual disability. She dreams of being a police officer right now, which makes perfect sense because she loves to enforce the rules. Her teachers will continue to work with her on core workplace competencies until she reaches high school, where she would then work with a vocational evaluator to assess her strengths and needs and identify possible career paths or something that might be adjacent that might be a good fit for her. From there, she would hone her skills, both specific to the job and

general workplace readiness skills. An internship would be secured where she could get increased exposure

[00:17:49] and practice in the workplace. She will be working on life skills to help her be as independent as possible, and when she completes her time in public school at 22, she will be ready to enter the workforce in a job she is passionate and feels prepared for. My third child is six and wants to be a dinosaur trainer, and I don't know that we can do anything with that, but please help our students with disabilities. Thank you so much. Thank you. Carla Sola, followed by Stephen Meyer.

[00:18:17] Good afternoon. My name is Carla Sola. I am also here to speak in favor of a workforce transition center for LCPS students. I have a son on the autism spectrum who graduated in 2023. After a year in Project SEARCH, which is one of the two LCPS postgraduate programs, he's working as a bakery clerk at Harris Teeter. It seems as if hospitality and food prep are the main employment opportunities available for special ed students. So what if we thought more broadly about their employment opportunities, such as agriculture, skilled trades, or information

[00:18:56] technology industries? And what if we focused on their job skills as opposed to their academic or certification requirements. I attended the LCPS Workforce Summit on October 18th, a great opportunity for LCPS to develop partnerships with county employers.

[00:19:14] And I sat in on a breakout group with IT cybersecurity business folks. Initially, there was some discussion about how special ed students couldn't possibly be able to work in this field. So I described my son's skills, not his educational background as a graduate with an applied studies diploma. I said my son learns best by visual demonstration and hands-on practice.

[00:19:38] He's hyper-focused and enjoys repetitive tasks that would drive other people out of their minds. He translates language very literally, making it almost impossible for him to lie or over-exaggerate. And then when I asked the group, are there any possibilities for a person with these attributes to work in an IT or cybersecurity company, every hand in the room went up. I told them I was a member of SEAC, and we were strongly advocating for a transition center in the county. I encouraged them to think about how they could instruct the transition center from the very beginning

[00:20:13] to provide them with employees that have the skills that they need, and I got a positive response. Imagine if my son, who currently makes \$14 an hour, were employed in an IT field making twice that much. Thank you, Ms. Sola. Thank you. All right. Stephen Meyer, followed by Jennifer D. Donato. I'm a proud member of SEAC and I urge you to support the creation of a new transition center. Having been a middle school case manager for students with disabilities and a pre-algebra teacher for many of them, I hope I can add another dimension to the discussion today.

[00:20:52] I retired from teaching at Harper Park Middle School two years ago. My students had an array of individual challenges. What they all had in common were unique personalities, interests, a wide array of skills.

[00:21:07] Many of these students would have done well in CTE programs, but most were below grade level in both math and reading, and they were not eligible to enter MATA. I think most lacked hope and an interest in academics, primarily because there were no pathways that would lead them to success after high school.

[00:21:28] The Transition Center will serve so many of these students, providing them with quality assessments to highlight their skills and capabilities, the ability to improve them, and career and technical education pathways. The National School Board Association analyzed data from the Perkins Act and concluded that students with IEPs who complete CTE programs had a higher rate of academic achievement and success than peers who did not. LCPS currently has 10,275

[00:22:04] students with IEPs. We have mostly underserved this section of our student body for decades. A new transition center is an important step to move us forward and since we're in the planning phase we should make this an outstanding model institution i urge your support thank you mr jennifer d donato followed by trisha fontanilla good afternoon i'm jennifer de donato parent

[00:22:37] hillside pto member and seac member and i'm coming to you to request funding to provide hillside elementary and all lcps elementary schools with inclusive playgrounds inclusive playgrounds are designed to be accessible and enjoyable for children of all abilities, including those with physical, cognitive, and sensory disabilities. The benefits of inclusive playgrounds, though, extend far beyond the individual children who use them. They also promote social inclusion and acceptance, helping to break down barriers and reduce stigma. Inclusive playgrounds can serve as

[00:23:17] a model for our broader community demonstrating our commitment to diversity equity and inclusion hillside elementary's playground is over 20 years old it's undersized and it's not inclusive loudon county does not currently provide inclusive playgrounds throughout the county for its residents nor do we really have the park space to do that but loudon county has elementary schools embedded throughout this county. By supporting and building inclusive playgrounds at our elementary schools, you are providing inclusive playgrounds for all of our residents

[00:23:55] across our entire county. LCPS has a plan to build these playgrounds, but unfortunately, it's woefully underfunded. Currently, they only have funding to build three playgrounds a year, which at this rate, it would take over 20 years to build inclusive playgrounds at our elementary schools. We can do better. In talking with LCPS, if they get the funding, they can manage 12 playgrounds a year. That would mean all of our schools would have it in five years. Please fully fund inclusive playgrounds for Hillside Elementary, as well as all elementary schools and Loudoun

[00:24:30] County public schools to build those inclusive playgrounds within five years. Thank you all so much for your support. Thank you. Tricia Fontanilla, followed by Brian Perez, and he's our last speaker. Good afternoon. My name is Tricia Fontanella. I am a speech language pathologist at Mountain View Elementary School, and I think that I can say that I speak for every speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, and physical therapist in the district when I say that we wholeheartedly support and ask for your support for inclusive playgrounds for all of our elementary

[00:25:04] schools. I drive by the beautiful athletic facilities at Loudoun Valley High School on my way to work. And I am struck by the discrepancy of the lack of age-appropriate play facilities for our early childhood special education students and our other students with special needs throughout elementary school. At Mountain View Elementary, we do have a courtyard that's dedicated to our early childhood children. And it is because of the efforts of our teachers and parents and community

[00:25:39] that we have a small play structure, a little area for riding trikes, but none of the equipment is commercial grade and needs to be frequently replaced. The footing is uneven and inaccessible for children who can't walk, and we make the best of it, but it is certainly not equitable for our littlest learners.

My son is a senior at the Academies of Loudoun in the automotive program, And I am struck by the amazing facility that is provided there and the preparation that's setting him up for a career in doing what he loves.

[00:26:14] But then that leads me to the transition center and how badly needed that is for our children who cannot access a program like the Academies of Loudoun. We need to fully get behind our statement of diversity, equity, and inclusion by providing equitable programs and facilities for all of our students in Loudoun County.

[00:26:36] thank you thank you okay Brian Perez is our last speaker hi I'm Brian Perez I'm Brayden's dad that kid over there that's looking at me waving quite the charmer I'll be honest when I first heard about the idea of an inclusive playground I didn't really see how it pertained to us but the more I thought about it I'm more the more I realized that it has a lot to do with us see

[00:27:10] Braden wears glasses, something so ubiquitous that most people don't even think about it when they see glasses on someone, and certainly don't think of it as a disability aid. It's a small accommodation.

[00:27:26] It gives Braden supervision, we call it. But more importantly, it removes a barrier for him. I imagine the difficulty you might face day to day and all the experiences you might miss out on if you couldn't fully engage the same way everyone else does.

[00:27:44] Of course, that led me to realize the challenges that other kids face, the much greater barriers. And then I started thinking, what if Hillside's playground was only for kids without glasses? I imagine Brayden standing there watching all the other kids play every day without him, all the interactions he'd miss out on.

[00:28:09] And it really turns my stomach. And that's why I'm here speaking. It really goes both ways. He would miss out interactions with them, and they would miss out on all the interactions with him. Hillside needs an inclusive playground because it benefits everyone.

[00:28:29] I'd never want Brayden to be excluded, just like I'd never want Brayden to exclude anyone else. Hillside needs a playground that promotes the same thing and doesn't force anyone to sit on the sideline. Thank you, Mr. Perez. I want to thank everybody for coming out tonight and speaking, and especially the children with their signs.

[00:28:48] Thank you so much. We're going to go on to the co-chairs reports, and then we're going to go right to the special education transitioning item. Co-chair Mansfield. Thank you, co-chair Tricone, and board of supervisors for hosting this joint committee meeting this afternoon.

[00:29:09] And I'm just going to be fairly brief. I wanted to present to you just a couple of items that have happened since we last met. And as we've heard public comment, I'll first mention the October 18th LCPS Workforce Summit. which brought together more than 250 community members, business leaders, educators, and nonprofits to discuss how we can collaborate to shape the future of our workforce development through responsive career pathways for students.

[00:29:37] One of the summit's key messages is that LCPS must provide traditional academic education and serve as a bridge between classroom learning and real-world experience. The Workforce Summit was an invaluable opportunity to strengthen connections between lcps and our local community ensuring that we are providing the best possible support and opportunities for our students the conversations and ideas

exchanged will play a key role in shaping our future workforce initiatives including a potential transition center that hopefully we'll

[00:30:10] hear more about today legislative breakfast was held on october 25th for lcps to share with our elected representatives a list of topics for our legislative program forecasted for the upcoming general assembly session. Our priorities include enacting JLARC recommendations and fully funding Virginia public schools, which we'll hear about today, continued support for a Loudoun-based recovery school, an audit of higher education teacher preparation programs, comprehensive student mental health policy and funding, commitments to the teaching profession, and

[00:30:47] support for special education transition programs and services. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Watson Mountain Middle School. Our 100th school held our dedication on November 13th.

[00:31:03] It was a beautiful and moving dedication ceremony honoring the legacy of the Watson community that has been an integral part of Loudoun's history for generations. Members of the Watson community opened the First Baptist Church in 1896, which also served as a school for black children until 1945.

[00:31:21] What made it even more special was that members of the Watson community were present at the ceremony, including Mrs. Brooks, who was turning 100 years old. 100 years old, 100th school. Watson Middle School is an inspiring example of a school name that helps to build an educational community that honors the past, celebrates the present, and shapes a brighter future for all students.

[00:31:49] And on that positive note, I will end my remarks because we have a very full and important agenda today. Thank you. Thank you. I had the pleasure of attending that dedication, and the Yeti was my favorite thing.

[00:32:05] Their mascot is a Yeti. So I love that. The creativity of that mascot. I love that. So I was very pleased to attend that dedication. So here's the Board of Supervisors report. Co-chair Glass is unable to attend today's meeting. So as vice co-chair, I will provide the report for her. At the board's finance committee meeting last week, the committee recommended that the Board of Supervisors amend our capital facility standards with relation to teen centers.

[00:32:40] Our capital facility standards are descriptions of what size and what features different government facilities in the county should be. At the recommendation of parks and recreation staff, teen centers were removed as a capital facility and were instead incorporated into the recreation center standards for the county.

[00:33:01] growing trend based on teens preferences is to incorporate teen programming into other facilities where they can interact with people of different ages not having a standalone teen center. Loudoun County has successful and popular teen programs at recreation centers and libraries throughout the county. Having a teen myself I know they do like to be integrated in the community and not be separate as a standalone facility so I think that's a great idea. The board also adopted our legislative program ahead of the general assembly session in 2025 as

[00:33:36] we will discuss in the jlark item later our number one budget priority for 2025 is to enact jlark recommendations to improve the state public education funding model that's all I have for today so we will go on to our information items and we'll go to one oh you forgot one thing okay co-chairman's I'm

sorry I forgot one thing it wasn't in yellow so just as a FYI today a joint statement was signed by the chairs of eight school boards in northern Virginia public school divisions

[00:34:15] was issued to VDOE and the Virginia Board of Education to delay the implementation of the new school performance and support framework for at least one year and that delay would allow sufficient time to fully develop the framework and ensure successful implementation that advances educational excellence and supports our educators. We had talked a little bit about it last meeting, and I just wanted to give you an update as of today, what we're trying to do. Thank you.

[00:34:44] Co-Chair Mansfield. All right, so we'll go to item number one, special education transitioning, and we have Ms. Richardson from LCPS Student Services and Kevin, Mr. Lewis from LCPS support services. So thank you for providing information on this item. Good afternoon and thank you. It is a pleasure to join you here today. I am also joined by, right to my left, Dr. Paige Carter, our Director of Special Education, Ms. Jenna Arndt, our Supervisor

[00:35:20] of Transition Services, Mrs. Suzanne Birch, and Mrs. Sarah Hendricks. They're both Transition Specialist. I'm excited to introduce the work we are doing within Loudoun County Public Schools to support transition services for students with disabilities. Transition services are a vital bridge between school and life beyond the classroom, designed to empower students with disabilities to achieve their post-secondary goals, whether they involve higher education, employment opportunities, or independent living.

[00:35:58] These services are more than just a mandate. They represent a commitment to ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, has the tools, resources, and opportunities to thrive in their chosen path.

[00:36:14] During our time together, I'll provide a brief overview of what special education is with a focus of transition planning for students with disabilities And share our ultimate goal, which is to establish the LCPS Career and Technical Education Transition Center for Students with Disabilities.

[00:36:37] This center will serve as a hub for personalized skill building, career readiness, and technical training, bridging the gap between school and real-world opportunities. It reflects our dedication to fostering success for every student.

[00:37:00] Now we're transitioning to our overview for special education, and I will just give you a very high-level view. Our governing law comes from the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. that's the federal law, which ensures that every identified student with a disability in public education is afforded a free, appropriate public education, and every state then writes their own regulations for their public school systems. Eligibility, we are able to serve students that

[00:37:32] are eligible under the IDEA from 2 to 21 inclusive. We also serve students up to one or more of of the 14 disability categories. Child Find and Early Intervention for children aged birth to two.

[00:37:53] We offer Part C services and then they transition to school-age services, which are Part B. Every student that's eligible under the IDEA has an Individualized Education Program, IEP, which is created to set personalized goals, accommodations. We talk about instructional strategies, services, and then we always talk about the least restrictive environment for our students with disabilities, meaning that they are placed in settings as close to general education as possible. We also offer a continuum of services

[00:38:32] in public education for students with disabilities, which is a range of services based on their individual needs. It's from the general education classroom and sometimes to separate facilities. Our focus for students with disabilities is always specialized instruction. So students may receive a variety of services as well as related services such as speech language, occupational therapy, counseling, and behavior support. Transition planning. We start that process for

[00:39:09] students with disabilities at the age of 14. We talk about post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. We also have an obligation under the IDEA to inform our parents of their educational rights and procedural safeguards. This includes the right to participate in meetings, receive notices, request evaluations, and resolve disputes. Our funding comes from the federal level, as well as state and local sources.

[00:39:44] Training and resources come from our Virginia Department of Education to support our compliance with federal law and state regulations. Lastly, special education has a huge compliance and monitoring piece, which comes from the Virginia Department of Education as well as the United States Department of Education.

[00:40:09] Now we'll move on to planning for transition planning for students with disabilities. In LCPS, transition planning is an integral part of supporting students with disabilities as they prepare for life beyond high school.

[00:40:28] This process begins during the school year when a student turns 14, as their individualized education program team initiates these discussions to set personalized goals for post-secondary success. To ensure consistency and quality in this process, all special educators and designated staff are trained in transition planning. Each high school in LCPS is equipped with a transition teacher and job coach, providing direct support to students as they navigate

[00:41:05] career exploration, skill development, and community involvement. LCPS also offers programming to enhance real-world learning opportunities. As you have heard earlier, we have seven community and schools together programs. Those are our CAST programs, four of which are school-based and three are based in our community.

[00:41:34] Among these are Project SEARCH, which is at Lansdowne Resort, where students engage in an immersive workplace experience. And the Start on Success program, which partners with Inova Loudoun Hospital to provide hands-on career preparation.

[00:41:55] We also offer community independent instruction, which promotes independent living skills beginning as early as preschool and extending through their post-secondary years. These efforts are supported by the Office of Special Education, which includes a supervisor of transition services and two dedicated transition specialists.

[00:42:24] Transition planning for students with disabilities is a comprehensive and collaborative process. It is set to prepare our students for success in the areas of employment, education, independent living, and training.

[00:42:48] I will now give you an overview of some of the processes that support this planning. The process starts with a transition assessment. We identify the student's strengths, interests, needs, and goals. Then we conduct a transition interview.

[00:43:06] It's a critical part of the process by conducting the interview with the student and, when necessary, their parents and guardians. The next step of the process is measurable goals.

[00:43:23] We are charged by law to base these goals on the assessment and interview findings. The team then develops measurable goals in each of the transition areas. Lastly, we have coordinated activities and services.

[00:43:39] This might include career exploration, skill development, workshops, post-secondary program applications, or independent living training. We work collaboratively with our community, our vocational programs, and service providers.

[00:43:58] By combining these elements, transition planning becomes a dynamic student-centered process that empowers students to envision and work toward their future. With input from families and support from their school-based team, each student is equipped with a plan that reflects their unique potential and prepares them for meaningful opportunities in work,

[00:44:23] learning, and life. Next slide. As previously mentioned, our ultimate goal is to create our very own LCPS Career and Technical Education Transition Center. In LCPS, we are committed to empowering students with disabilities to achieve their fullest potential.

[00:44:52] Our Career and Technical Educational Transition Center will be the cornerstone of this commitment by providing students with disabilities the tools, the training, and opportunities that they need to succeed in their post-secondary journeys.

[00:45:12] This innovative center will be designed to bridge the gap between school and adulthood by offering the hands-on experiences, skill-building programs, and career readiness training tailored to individual strengths and aspirations of our students.

[00:45:30] It will serve as a hub where students can explore career paths, develop their independence, and gain the confidence to thrive in their chosen endeavors. Through collaboration with families, educators, and community partners, the LCPS CTE Trans Transition Center will shape brighter futures for every student, one milestone at a time.

[00:45:57] Some of the key components in inclusivity in education. It goes without saying that students with disabilities often face significant barriers to accessing quality education and career training.

[00:46:14] Our transition center will be tailored to their needs to ensure that they receive the appropriate support and resources. Economic empowerment. A skilled and diverse workforce benefits our economy. It reduces their dependency on social welfare programs and promotes social inclusion, personal development. The center will provide a supportive place where students can not

[00:46:49] only work on their technical skills, but also their soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem solving. We will foster a customized curriculum which offers both specially designed instruction, and specialized CTE courses tailored for various disabilities. Support services. We will have counselors and job coaches, special education teachers who can all support the personalized guidance and support needed. Partnerships and collaboration. We want to

[00:47:27] work with local businesses and industries and community partnerships to create a pipeline of internships and job placements, evaluation and improvement. We want to create a system of ongoing

assessment and feedback processes to make sure that we are continuously working to improve the program's effectiveness. Who will we serve? Students earning or who have completed an applied

[00:48:02] studies diploma. Students access instruction through an alternate curriculum tailored to their unique needs that are working towards the Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning. These students receive targeted support and opportunities to build skills for employment, independent living, and community engagement. The second group of students that we will serve are students that are working towards a standard diploma beyond the traditional four-year timeline.

[00:48:37] As determined by their IEP teams, these students benefit from extended time and individualized resources to meet their graduation requirements while preparing for post-secondary success, all the while accessing instruction through the Virginia Standards of Learning.

[00:48:58] This approach ensures that all students, regardless of diploma path, are supported in achieving their personal and educational goals. Here, we've begun to outline the two key areas of focus for our Transition Center.

[00:49:21] The pathways, 21st century workplace readiness skills for employability. We emphasize essential soft skills, again, such as communication, interview skills, resume writing, and appropriate dress and hygiene.

[00:49:38] Career and technical education pathways, and please note that this is not an exhaustive list of all of the possible career options, but we've highlighted some such as hospitality, culinary, HVAC, cosmetology, customer service, automotive, child care, first aid, and medical services, as well as health and wellness.

[00:50:01] The center will also offer robust staffing, a team of dedicated professionals. They will work to ensure comprehensive support for each and every student.

[00:50:17] We will offer diverse learning environments, classroom for direct instruction, and lab spaces for hands-on experiences, as well as community partnerships. We will work collaboratively with local businesses and organizations facilitating a smooth transition to the workforce.

[00:50:41] Parents and families play a crucial role in the success of a student's transition. So in addition to open communication and collaboration, the LCPS Transition Center will offer workshops and resources for parents, as well as parent support groups.

[00:51:00] Through this comprehensive approach, our Transition Center will empower students with disabilities to develop the skills and confidence needed to achieve their post-secondary goals and thrive in their chosen careers.

[00:51:16] I thank you for your time and kind attention. Got to put my mic on. That was excellent. Thank you very much for that thorough report. So we'll go around to see if anybody has questions or comments for Mrs. Richardson.

[00:51:35] Put your light on. Vice Chair Brissman. Thank you. This sounds like it's very well researched and thought out. Do you know when the center is going to open?

[00:51:51] Is it in this upcoming budget? Where is it sort of timeline-wise? Certainly. As staff and as board members, I know that we have prioritized the transition center for FY26. I also want to acknowledge that it

requires space because we need to have space that is adequate for classrooms as well as these experiential labs that we want students to participate in.

[00:52:22] So we continue to noodle through that as we work through the budget process. So when you say it requires space, are you guys thinking you're going to build a new space? You're going to lease space? I think those are all available options, sure.

[00:52:38] And as Mr. Lewis knows, I constantly am asking him for new spaces. I'm sure you are. So if it's in the budget, but we don't know if it has to be built, or will we know when we're looking at the budget if you're considering building or leasing?

[00:53:01] What I'm getting at is if it goes in the back of a CIP, it's six years. But if it's something you can lease, it's probably faster. Certainly. And at this time, we're looking at all available spaces. And as I have learned through this process with Mr. Lewis and his team, because not only are we trying to lift up the transition center, we have also been focused on our recovery school program.

[00:53:25] Some of the available spaces that we've identified for lease also have a long timeline associated with rezoning to make sure that we can serve students K-12. So it's fair to say that we are looking into all available options.

[00:53:41] Okay, and we'll know what the recommendation is at budget time or? Yes. Okay, okay, great. And just a comment about the inclusive playgrounds. So there were like two things in the public comment that i heard inclusive playgrounds and the transition center i just want to point out that the playground at algonkin regional park just reopened and it is fully accessible i just went past it so it's pretty exciting i just went past it this weekend and it is fully accessible and

[00:54:18] also the playground at douglas is also fully accessible so but i think the one at hankin and algonkin regional park is um open earlier than than we thought so that's exciting thank you thank you so um april thank you madam chair um and again uh thank you for engaging in this conversation with us and um to the board of supervisors for engaging as well one of my initial question, I'll offer a question and a comment. I'd like to learn a little bit more

[00:54:55] about how the pathways are chosen or will be chosen in the future. And again, with a nod to my Algonquian colleague, Vice Chair Briskman, I like to point out as much as possible that 85% of Loudoun's population lives east of 15. And I'd also like to note that given some of our challenges in the transportation department being located near where our businesses are centered feels like a great choice for me. So I'll thank you for entertaining my question. Certainly Mrs.

[00:55:34] Chandler. I anticipate that that nod to 85 percent of our population that's for Mr. Lewis. We plan on and have been working with our director of career and technical education Dr. Michael Grubbs with identifying some of our current pathways, but we know that there's more work needed. We'll need to put, we'll have, we'll need to have outreach to our teachers, to our parents, to our students to see what their interests are so that we can continue to build the pathways out for our transition center. Okay, thank you. Co-chair Mansfield. Thank you,

[00:56:10] co-chair Tacroni. So I just have to put in my plug because I feel like we have missed a huge whole population of people here in the community that we are not tapping into their strengths and their opportunity to be productive members of society later on after school.

[00:56:31] And I have such high hopes because I cannot wait to see how this progresses. And we have some incredibly dedicated parents and highly creative staff that are tremendously knowledgeable and I think all of us together including with our business partnerships can really do something world class with this something something like academies of Loudoun you know for our kids with disabilities and I just think it could be something that would be

[00:57:04] an amazing model for other areas so that's my plug I appreciate your um your presentation as always. And I thank you for all everybody who comes out and all the people who work with our kids. Thank you. Thank you. School board. Thank you. I'm also going to put in my plug because we can do that. So I'm going to do it, especially here in this space. I think it's really important that we recognize. I sort of feel like this is just a really pivotal moment or it could be because bringing this information to the board of supervisors and into this space really highlights

[00:57:43] what a partnership this can be and knowledge is power right we know that if we have the knowledge of what the need is and we truly understand that then when it comes across a budget sheet it means so much more and I've learned that over this past year and so we're looking forward to pursuing this as a school board and making it a priority and you know having the faces and the children and our moms who are fighting in the trenches and have been for so long to reach this moment honestly it feels like a big deal to me I remember when I first got on the board I sat down with our SEAC leadership and they were like this is sort of a pipe dream but we're gonna keep saying

[00:58:21] it but we're less than a year and we're sitting here like talking about something that feels like it could be very real very soon and so I really just want to highlight that and I have a question but I don't know if it actually needs an answer it's sort of like a rhetorical question just to kind of keep on everybody's mind but I'm wondering what the percentage of our special education population is coming out of LCPS and entering the workforce and what it could be if this happens and I think that that comparison is worth thinking about so thank you thank you so um yeah I think

[00:58:59] a partnership is something we can work on for sure I'm very committed to helping this population and I kind of have a question so Mata is the Monroe Technology I noticed that a lot of the um a lot of this skills that we were looking for or the career paths are similar to Mata is there a possibility to put those two together in a transition center because I know academies allowed and is looking to expand so I'm wondering if that might help accelerate you know a place

[00:59:33] for both Mata and a transition center that's a wonderful idea and certainly something that we can look into as a division okay yeah because I think finding a place for both might make sense since there's a lot of similarities between the two and they can work together I did hear something that was speaker said that we're only serving 100 students in the transition center and that currently or or with transition services and that there's 10 000 students enrolled

[01:00:08] with IEPs um can you help me with that number because that seems like a big disconnect certainly and so there's over 10 000 students eligible under the idea in LCPS that's from preschool to post-secondary okay through our cast programming as well as project search and so we're serving about 100 students all of our other students are receiving transition services at their high schools uh okay okay how many are we serving do you know at the high schools do you have a total number

[01:00:42] I do not but we can certainly work on getting that to you we have it oh okay Good evening. In grades 8 through 12, which it's really ages 14 through 22 that we're looking at for transition, there's a total

of 3,897 students, but that includes students on the SOL curriculum

[01:01:18] as well as those on an adapted or essentialized standards. But postgraduate students or those returning grads who come back on an adapted curriculum, we have about 134. So the CAST program really serves the population that would be considered postgraduate. Okay, thank you. Thank you so much. And yeah, I look forward to getting this item for the FY2026 budget. And I'm wondering, i heard somebody else mention that doing 12 playgrounds a year um i don't know if that's

[01:01:55] something that you're going to propose as well inclusive playgrounds because right now i guess we're just doing three playgrounds a year so three playgrounds a year is in current funding but in the proposed cip we do get to a space in 20 is it 28 or 31 where we start looking at doing i think it's 10 a year yes sir that's correct well thank you that that that'll make a difference because i heard everybody tonight that everybody would like inclusive playgrounds at all elementary schools so that'll help us get there all right i think anybody else have comments okay go ahead so i

[01:02:33] think that 10 isn't until 2031 is that correct that we won't even look to do 10 until 2031 currently just i don't have that right in front of me right now but i think it's the first three years or three each and then the fourth year so 26 27 28 maybe it's 29 but um so we do have that and we'll be talking about that tomorrow night with the school board we have a presentation specifically about playgrounds and we'll have all that information up on the screen for you 10 is until 2029 is what you're saying okay okay but you're going to be talking about it yeah yes

[01:03:10] i don't have it right in front of me so i'm sorry i can't pinpoint that number all right thank you you mr lewis okay so we're gonna go on to item number two which is the j lark study findings on school funding and we'll have uh dr spence and mr freeman come and thank you very much mrs richardson and and um mr lewis i got it she's not listed but that's okay mrs hammond okay thank you yeah so good evening and thank you all we appreciate the opportunity to

[01:03:46] talk about this important topic as we just noted i'm joined this afternoon by julia hammond legislative consultant from cozen o'connor and she'll introduce her colleague and then we're pleased to share a high level overview of the jlark study the findings the impact of the funding formula on lcps operations and our position and efforts to date since that study has been published and i will note just quickly that all of the information presented today is drawn directly from j lark's official reports and recommendations along with our analysis so during the 2021 special

[01:04:23] session of the general assembly sj 294 directed the joint legislative audit and review commission to study the cost of education in virginia make an accurate assessment of the costs of the standards of quality or the soq the final report around this was published in july of 2023 and included significant findings, 20 recommendations, and five policy options. These findings were further broken down into near-term recommendations, long-term recommendations, and recommendations for legislative and executive action. So on the screen here is a quick summary of the overall findings from the JLARC study. I'm not going to go through all of them, but some of the highlights

[01:05:02] include a finding that Virginia school divisions receive less funding than national and state averages, a finding that the current funding formula, the SOQ, underestimates the actual cost of education, a finding that the formula does not adequately account for the needs of higher needs students, such as those in poverty with special needs or who are English learners, and the formula also does not

adequately account for local labor costs or the challenges faced by small divisions. In general, there was a finding that the state of Virginia is underfunding

[01:05:38] the per pupil cost for education across the commonwealth by about two thousand dollars per pupil and we'll get into the the funding on that here in just a second for example on this slide you'll notice that most if not all of the JLARC study recommendations come with significant funding obligations they include a state and a local match as we go through the coming slides we'll detail each of the recommendations that that are here including the projected state impact, percent change, and estimated LCPS state funding changes.

[01:06:10] We'll begin with near-term recommendations from the JLARC study. So the first three near-term recommendations are captured on this slide. The first one is about addressing technical formula issues. The current formula does not include some necessary costs. For example, it does not include funding for clerical positions. It also doesn't apply the cost of competing adjustment to some positions when it should. It also places arbitrary caps on certain non-personnel expenses, such as professional development. The cost in this case is \$45 million in state funding and fiscal year

[01:06:44] \$23. The median amount distributed to each locality would be estimated at \$130,000. And in LCPS, we've estimated that to be approximately \$2.8 million from the state. The next recommendation would be to discontinue changes made during the Great Recession.

[01:07:04] These changes largely included the implementation of the support cap, which you've heard a lot about. This reduced funding levels below their prevailing market costs for non-instructional support positions, such as front office staff. It also excluded essential costs like travel from the formula, even though these need to be incurred by school divisions.

[01:07:23] And it also used inaccurate assumptions related to federal fund accounting. The cost of this recommendation is \$515 million in state funding and fiscal year \$23. The median amount per locality is \$1.8 million, and in LCPS, we estimate the impact to produce approximately \$26.6 million if fully funded.

[01:07:45] And then the third JLARC near-term recommendation on this slide is to use division averages instead of linear weighted average in calculations. Using the linear weighted average methodology, underweight salaries and other costs for large school divisions. And the proposal is to instead use the locality's actual historical spending data, which is something that was done prior to the recession.

[01:08:04] The recommendation cost is \$190 million in state funding. In fiscal year, \$23, the median amount per locality would be \$691,000. And for LCPS, we believe that would be a positive \$9.7 million impact amount. And again, just a reminder that these funding amounts are pulled from the 2023 report and would need to be updated for future implementation years.

[01:08:27] These are the next three near-term recommendations. The fourth one here is to change the local ability to pay or the LCI component of the formula to a three-year average. The current LCI uses the most recent single year of data, and the three-year average would smooth out funding amounts and give localities time to adjust.

[01:08:46] For example, if there were a sudden drop in state funding, if their tax base were to increase dramatically. The cost for this would estimate to be a decrease in overall state funding by \$1.5 million in fiscal year 23. The median amount per locality would be 0.02%, and the LCPS anticipated impact would be a decrease of \$100,000.

[01:09:08] We also see a recommended change in the at-risk funding formula. The current formula uses outdated data related to free lunch recipients. provides very different amounts to students with similar needs across localities. The JLARC report estimated \$250 million in fiscal year, \$23, but the General Assembly did amend the at-risk program and provide commensurate funding, so the actual cost to fully implement this proposal would be much less. We think the impact would be about \$4.8 million to LCPS. And then the last near-term recommendation would be to study special education staffing needs, something we will be talking about

[01:09:46] during this budget per student special education funding has declined in the commonwealth and jlarck could not understand how these calculations are being made their near-term suggestion is to provide funding in a separate block for these students using what divisions have historically spent on special education in the past so with that i'm going to turn it over to julia thank you for being here thank you so much for having me again my name is julia hammond i'm with cozen o'connor and i I have the pleasure of serving as the lobbyist for the Loudoun County Public Schools and the school board. I'm going to go through the long-term recommendations. Now, all of these

[01:10:24] recommendations by JLARC have now been handed off, if you will, to the Joint Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education, formed by members of both the House Appropriations and the Senate Finance Committees. They have met once and will meet again in December on the short-term recommendations that Dr. Spence went through with their plans for implementing during the upcoming session. The ones I'm going to go through have a much longer ramp. JLARC estimates somewhere between seven to ten years. Again, depending on how the first set of short-term are implemented and where the needs remain, obviously they'll adjust. But the first one on the slide in front of you deals

[01:11:00] with developing new staff ratios. The goal is to replace outdated teacher-student ratios with modern staffing standards aligned with current division practices. It's silly to mention that we should have a footing formula that accurately describes what's happening, but that is what's happened throughout the JLARC report. They mentioned that multiple inputs used to calculate funding were outdated, inaccurate, and didn't reflect where the Commonwealth has been for several years. The second recommendation is to update out-of-date salary assumptions during re-benchmarking, again, to make sure that we are reflecting what's actually happening.

[01:11:37] The third one, replace costs of competing adjustments with a newer, more accurate method for high-cost areas. This is very specific to Northern Virginia, that the new method would better reflect higher labor costs in some school divisions so that we can make sure that school divisions are being appropriately funded. These three, again, will be looked at now, after, now that JLARC is done, by the Joint Committee. And those funding models that you have here, as Dr. Spence mentioned, the, they are pretty hefty price tag, but obviously as they get new data in, they will have to adjust. The biggest hole you see here by the state impact,

[01:12:16] the joint subcommittee asked the Department of Education to provide updated data, and the data came in the evening before their last meeting. The money committee staff did not feel it was appropriate to present that to the members, so in December we're hoping to have the updated Department of Education numbers to reflect, and certainly that information be provided to LCPS so they can make whatever adjustments may be necessary here.

[01:12:41] Now on the long term, JLARC was very kind as to provide policy options for changes to the formula. And as we go through the five items here, the two of them in particular, oh, we put it in bright red so you could see the hit that obviously the Commonwealth is going to have to consider.

[01:13:02] But the first option is to develop and implement a plan to increase compensation to meet the meet the statutory requirement that we are at or above the national average. Obviously, state impact and the percentage change depends on the actual goal and numbers provided by DOE.

[01:13:20] The second one is to amend the code and the Appropriation Act directing that a locality's student enrollment and population be equally weighted when calculating LCI for the SOQ rather than the current, which is two-thirds student enrollment and one-third general population.

[01:13:37] is the biggest um that is a significant hit at 22.1 million uh lcps funding from the state miss hammond would you please under would you please um explain that a little bit more and pack that what you just said a little bit doesn't understand my apologies uh the local composite index um so the locality's ability to pay right now is a is based upon a calculation of two-thirds of your student enrollment and one-third the other one-third is your general population and what

[01:14:12] jlark found is that is a very inaccurate way to determine what your actual locality and school division costs would be taking just a percentage of your populations and so the what jlark suggests now again these are going to have to have lots of discussion and when i get to the end i'm going to talk about some of the the plans for that ongoing discussion but it was to have it be that it would the locality student enrollment and population be equally weighted which honestly will for larger school divisions like your own

[01:14:50] should be a significant increase in dollars sorry number three is to change the code and the budget to replace the LCI with a revenue capacity index again Again, these are much longer term -- JLARC feels that the LCI is accurate, but they agree that it can be better, and there are other jurisdictions, other states that use more of a revenue capacity index for calculating, and so this is an option for the Commonwealth to look into.

[01:15:25] Again, this is going to be a multi-year study, and I wouldn't be surprised if some of these end up having their own subcommittees for discussion points at the General Assembly. Number four is the change of the code in the budget to replace the entire staffing-based SOQ formula with a new student-based funding formula.

[01:15:46] Throughout JLARC's presentations, not just to the commission members, but at last months or earlier this month, the joint committee, they repeatedly talked about how the inputs that we use in the SOQ are inaccurate and out of date, and they specifically gave a portion of their presentation about special education and English learners and if we had different student-based funding formula it would more accurately cover what school divisions and obviously the localities that provide them with their budgets pay per student to provide those services which is then if if for any reason option four wasn't palatable then to do it specifically for those two

[01:16:25] populations is the fourth change to student-based calculations for special education and English learner funding since those are the ones that cost more to provide. The joint committee plans on having multiple stakeholder meetings between now and whenever they start to implement these changes.

[01:16:43] As you know, we are in the second year of the state budget, so large funding changes are not going to be considered. Obviously, the governor will have his opportunity to put forward a budget before he leaves office next January, and a new governor will be able to take that and make suggested amendments to it, as will the new House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia.

[01:17:04] So at the earliest, these long-term policy changes, funding changes, would be considered in 2026, but it is anticipated that it will be further out, 5 to 10 years. I think 7 to 10 was the estimate JLARC gave, though many members of the General Assembly are bullish on opportunity to change given surpluses and other funding that's available.

[01:17:30] I'm looking at my colleague here, Jonathan, and I get to work hand-in-glove on funding and other issues for Loudoun County Public Schools, so I know he will correct me if I omitted anything during this. I think the, and good afternoon, Jonathan Freeman, legislative liaison for Loudoun County.

[01:17:49] I think the only thing that I'll add is the encouraging thing about the subcommittee, joint subcommittee on elementary and secondary funding is that the membership, five members from the House, five members from the Senate are all appointed by the House and Senate chairs of the money committees. So the encouraging thing is that these are recommendations that they are taking seriously. And I think the membership shows that Senator Locke, who's a very powerful conferee in the Senate, is the chair of the subcommittee.

[01:18:28] And so we are confident that these recommendations will definitely be taken seriously, as well as the near-term recommendations, which they look to address in the next two fiscal cycles. So to just wrap this up, and then we'll certainly be happy to answer any questions, I just want to mention briefly what LCPS is doing to advocate and support action based on the JLARC recommendations in addition to conversations that you just heard about.

[01:18:59] I just want to remind our community that LCPS and I believe the supervisors have adopted and advocated for legislative positions regarding these recommendations. LCPS has been doing that for the past two years since the release of this report. Unfortunately, none of those recommendations, as you've heard, have been fully addressed yet, but we do, as was just said, believe in the need for continued advocacy.

[01:19:20] As you can see on the next slide, there are specific positions related to the JLARC findings that LCPS has taken. And we're certainly happy to talk about any of those. But I just think it's worth noting local governments, and Loudoun County is no exception, increasingly have been bearing an ever-growing proportion of public education costs.

[01:19:42] Historically, the taxpayers in Loudoun County have provided funding that far exceeds the LCI. For example, the LCI for the fiscal year 25 budget is .5518. What that means is the local appropriating body should be able to fund approximately 55% of public education costs.

[01:19:59] But for fiscal year 25, Loudoun County is providing around 70% of the total funding needed to support LCPS. That is a trend across the Commonwealth where you have seen a significant shift towards localities funding what the state is not doing. So that is not unique to Loudoun County.

[01:20:15] And we do believe the General Assembly should enact JLARC's near-term and long-term recommendations. We also do want to at least acknowledge that the General Assembly has begun to

remove the support cap in recent years. I just want to again state that is a huge issue for school divisions across the Commonwealth.

[01:20:34] That was an arbitrary cap. Again, reminder for folks who may not remember, that was implemented all the way back during the Great Recession. Disproportionately limits local capacity to serve students with special needs, at-risk students, and English learners. We were told when that happened that it would be removed when the recession was over and it has never been removed. Although, again, the General Assembly in the last budget did begin to take steps to ameliorate that.

[01:21:00] But it's important to point out that positions like mental health specialists, instructional assistants, and other classroom supports that we have in place, for example, student assistance specialists, student support specialists, these are cost-effective ways to put caring adults in the lives of our students with high levels of needs.

[01:21:19] support cap arbitrarily excludes these positions and and we believe arbitrarily uh excludes the actual cost of educating the students in lowland county so we fully support getting behind that effort and with that thank you for the opportunity to share an update we can't predict what's going to happen but we're hopeful that with our collective advocacy some of these recommendations as was said will get addressed and we do hear the surpluses in the budget and that would be a good time to have that conversation with our delegation so i know that we are uh ready to answer any questions that you might have i also note that ms sharon willoughby our chief financial officer is

[01:21:58] also here with us to answer any questions that you might have thank you dr spence and ms hammond and jonathan freeman thank you so uh we'll take any questions from okay vice chair bristman thank you um so i just had some comments um and then maybe one question um the board of supervisors draft legislative agenda john can correct me if i'm wrong we did make the jlrk funding our number one funding priority i believe that's correct right so that will come to public hearing i

[01:22:34] believe in december december 11th december 11th and so i i don't expect any changes to that prior prioritization. I think everyone on the board actually is in support of getting more state funding for education. I sit on the Finance and Elections Committee at VACO. We had a joint steering committee meeting with Education Committee and sent a joint letter from both VACO committees to the governor, I believe the governor, to ask to fund our schools adequately.

[01:23:12] And I will just say, lastly, if we were to get the short-term funding, it comes to \$43.8 million, and that would be \$0.03 on our tax rate. If I am doing the math correctly, this year's, the tax rate we're thinking about, sorry, it would be \$0.03 because we are predicting next year a penny on our tax rate will be \$14 million.

[01:23:39] So back of the napkin math says that if we were to get just the short-term funding, it would save \$0.03 on our real estate tax in Loudoun County. So that is very, very impactful and would be. I have kind of a strange question, and John, Mr. Freeman, I don't know if you'll be able to answer this, but if the state were to just do the short-term funding, would you predict that the state would have to raise income taxes?

[01:24:06] Or could it just be covered with surplus or current funding? So I'm unsure of the answer to that. That would be the purview of the governor's introduced budget, the Senate Finance Chair, Chair Lucas, and the House Appropriations Chair, Chair Torian to hash that on the budget. I'm not totally sure.

[01:24:32] okay i i have another sort of question i i should probably know the answer to but when they do the biennium budget do they set the income tax rate like we do like we set our real estate tax rate is it kind of the same process or do they reset it every year how does that work i would have to double check okay all right well you can tell me offline i'm just was curious because i actually don't know how they do it i've never sort of watched it happen but i think those are all my questions. Thank you very much. I know across the state, folks in positions like mine and school board are very, very interested in rectifying this, especially something that's been in effect

[01:25:10] since the Great Recession. Thank you. Right. Well, I'll make some comments. So do you think the near-term recommendations of \$46 million will be in FY26? I think you mentioned it might be between a few fiscal budgets? I, based upon the work of the joint subcommittee, um, for house and house appropriations and Senate finance, they have asked for, they have another meeting in December, but many of the near term will be part of their legislative package. Their staff members, um,

[01:25:46] have already been working on language for it. Um, I don't know whether or not that'll be any of those items will be included in the governor's proposed, uh, recommendation. So he gets to make his in mid-December, which then the General Assembly Committee members get to decide whether they want to entertain or not. But I do know that based upon the very robust discussion that they had at the joint committee meeting, most of the near-term ones, the plan is for them to be included in some capacity. Okay. And the long-term is seven to ten years? Is that what you were saying?

[01:26:18] That's what JLARC is assuming. There will be more discussion and presentation on that in the joint committee. They've already started to talk about their work plan for next year, and it includes all of the long-term recommendations as part of that and how they will work on it going forward. And I know that, at least for now, many of the individuals who are discussing statewide options for the next gubernatorial election have been talking about funding for K-12. So, I mean, it is a very hot topic. Oh, absolutely. And like Vice Chair Brissman said, it's number one on our

[01:26:53] on our list um the 2 000 per pupil that um the state um owes locale owes localities is that for special education too or is that just a generic 2 000 per pupil that were short yeah that was in general uh the the cost estimate on the recommendations was if you if you spread that out across all the peoples in the commonwealth in general about 2 000 short per pupil wow Unbelievable. Yeah, that's a lot. Yeah.

[01:27:32] And this is this is complicated. I mean, I tried to understand, you know, it'll take a while to understand all this like local composite index and all this. But I think the the takeaway is that, you know, we've been underfunded and we need to catch up. And I agree with Dr. Spence that, you know, the county has been taking care of the you know, what what the state should have been taken care of.

[01:27:54] so the county's been funding the schools and you know we're happy to do that but it would be great if the state did their part so thank you well for for the for the for the for the students and for the teachers so yes i mean we want to take care of loudon county public schools so thank you very much and oh sorry one more question well i think the other thing is not just that we're underfunded But they don't even know how many special education teachers that we should really be using for our special education students.

[01:28:28] And one thing that we hear so much about is so hard to get special education teachers, and they're burning out fast. And so I think that we need to relook at those numbers and get paid adequately for them.

[01:28:45] So I saw that there's going to be a study for special education staffing, when is that being done? So the, when it comes to the funding or the appropriate funding for special education in the English language learners, that is all part of the long-term recommendation. Don't think of it as so much a new study. Obviously, a lot of groundwork has been done. Now it's having more stakeholder drilling down on those individual items to find out how best to do it. JLARC has provided the commission or the committee with lots of background information on how neighboring states do it and other examples across the nation.

[01:29:26] So this isn't going to be a reinvention of the wheel, but more trying to drill down on the appropriate way to do it. And they are very adamant about stakeholder opportunity. So to the extent you all want to participate in that, Jonathan and I will be happy to find opportunities for Loudoun County Public Schools and Loudoun County Board of Supervisors to make comment.

[01:29:46] Okay, thank you. One thing that we could do, we are gonna have our own study. I think, Dr. Spence, you might want to say a little bit about what we're looking at to do in Loudoun for a special education audit. Yes, ma'am.

[01:30:02] So we actually have commissioned an audit of our special education program. So there's a couple of different audits. Actually, this is not the first one. We've just gone through state audit, which is really about compliance. This audit is to take a more holistic view across all of our special education programs and all of our support and processes that are in place.

[01:30:25] We want to make sure that, for example, our identification processes are working, our IEP development processes are working, our training is appropriate and in place, our resources and staffing are appropriate and in place. So it's a broad look at our special education program that will compare us to national benchmarks And give us a good sense of where we stand and where our opportunities to improve are.

[01:30:45] I'm sure there will be funding recommendations that come out of that. I will also say in the interim, we are not sitting back idly. We have been listening to concerns about special education. Certainly since I've been here, that came up on every session of my listening tour. It comes up every time I talk with my teacher advisory, which are representatives from each of our schools.

[01:31:06] And our team between our budget and finance team and our special education team have been really working very closely together to identify how we provide services to our students that are not necessarily based simply on an SOQ ratio, which again, trying to communicate around the SOQs, the standards of quality, those are inadequate.

[01:31:27] They do not reflect the actual needs of our buildings. And so we have been trying to identify a staffing formula that is based on the needs of the student and not necessarily the number of students. And so that is its own unique challenge because we are already staffing well beyond the SOQs in special education.

[01:31:48] So, for example, if the special education caseload at the state is 1 to 24, which I think is accurate, we are staffing now given the needs and the program needs in nlcps at a ratio of one to ten but those are often sort of assigned based on that number of one to ten and not necessarily on the need of the student in the program and so that's really what we need to be taking a look at and quite frankly my

advocacy at the state level with regards to special education staffing is to go to the prevailing method so when we talked about prevailing method earlier which is look at

[01:32:26] what divisions are actually doing and fund based on that because what I think they would find if they were looking at the prevailing method for staffing and special education is they would see all divisions in the commonwealth are staffing beyond the standards. Thank you very much for that. Dr. Spence, any other comments? Thank you. Honestly, after what Dr. Spence has said, I don't feel that I have very much to add. I just think in terms of looking at the real needs and realizing that this is a mandated service that has been underfunded for perhaps two decades,

[01:33:06] it is hard to consider this going on for five to seven more years. And I understand that we are limited by what the Commonwealth is able to do, but in having the responsibility for owning our budget, it gives me pause to think about how we are going to meet the needs of our students as we know, they're exponentially, it's growing year to year and there's more need. So, you know, in agreement with my colleagues here, I just want to reiterate how important that is

[01:33:44] to our community. And thank you for the presentation. Thank you so much. All right, we're going to go to our last item, which is item number three, schedule of meetings.

[01:34:02] Monica Spells and Kevin Lewis are going to present that. Yes, ma'am, I'll go ahead and get started. Thank you. Thank you. Good evening, committee. This information item presents proposed meeting dates for the committee to convene in the calendar year 2025 for staff planning purposes and for action at the joint committee's first meeting in 2025 at LCPS.

[01:34:24] Both county and LCPS staff work together to determine these dates based on the respective governing bodies requirements for the frequency of meetings for this committee and in consideration of room availability, holidays, and notable activities happening with each organization, such as county budget sessions and high school graduations.

[01:34:44] without objection staff will work on scheduling the committee's first meeting to take place at lcps on march 24th 2025 with remaining listed dates in the item as part of an action item at that meeting all right thank you any any comments on the schedule okay i just want to make sure so march 24th is um when we do a lot of our work sessions you know budget work sessions and i'm just hoping it doesn't conflict with that with it you said you were look you looked at all that yes ma'am we've looked at that and so based on what our typical schedule has been it would not

[01:35:22] and also remember that the joint committee meetings typically take her take place on mondays and so we factored that in as well that true yeah we usually don't don't have the work sessions on a monday well okay all right any any other any comments thank you okay so i think that's our no we don't need a motion right I didn't see a motion so okay all right with that with no other business I call the meeting adjourned thank you



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