

### **Operations and Performance of Virginia’s Department of Education**

Authorized by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission on December 10, 2018

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is led by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who is tasked with providing “such assistance in his office as shall be necessary for the proper and uniform enforcement of the provisions of the school laws in cooperation with the local school authorities” (§ 22.1-23); and

WHEREAS, Virginia’s educational environment has become increasingly complex for many reasons including: a more competitive global economy necessitating a highly educated workforce; evolving standards for student readiness, and teacher and school assessment and accountability; a greater percentage of students living in poverty, with limited English proficiency, and with unique or special educational needs; and

WHEREAS, VDOE distributes more than \$8 billion annually in federal and state general funds to Virginia’s 132 school divisions for the purpose of educating 1.25 million public school students; and

WHEREAS, VDOE seeks to assist school divisions to design and implement instructional and special education programs; to regulate licensure of school personnel and preparation programs; and to administer statewide assessment tests; and

WHEREAS, Virginia’s 132 school divisions are of widely varying sizes and levels of administrative expertise, and receive substantially differing levels of state and local funding; and this wide variation necessitates effective and tailored state support; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly appropriated \$108 million for VDOE operations (comprising 57 percent general funds and 43 percent non-general funds); and VDOE was authorized to employ about 330 full-time equivalent staff in FY19; and

WHEREAS, VDOE classified and wage employee staffing declined following the Great Recession then subsequently increased; and

WHEREAS, a 2016 review by the Auditor of Public Accounts found several material weaknesses in VDOE’s budgeting and fiscal oversight and internal controls; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) has never reviewed VDOE central office operations; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the operations and performance of the Virginia Department of Education. In conducting its study, staff shall assess (i) whether VDOE successfully identifies major, statewide challenges to improving student performance—such as low performing schools and poor instructional quality—and implements workable strategies to address those challenges; (ii) whether VDOE adequately helps school divisions in the design and implementation of effective instructional and instructional support programs; (iii) whether VDOE sufficiently incorporates best practices into the assistance it provides and effectively facilitates sharing of evidence-based and innovative practices among school divisions; (iv) whether VDOE adequately monitors compliance with educational and operational requirements

that apply to school divisions; (v) whether VDOE effectively coordinates with other education and workforce agencies; (vi) whether the Board of Education has an effective relationship with VDOE; and (vii) whether VDOE is organized, staffed, and structured to ensure efficient and effective internal operations. JLARC shall make recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including local school divisions and boards, shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of state agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to its statutory authority.