

JLARC Workplan

2025



Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission

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1 JLARC Workplan

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) is the oversight agency of the Virginia General Assembly. The legislature established JLARC in 1973 to review and evaluate the operations and performance of state agencies and programs. Since its establishment, JLARC's responsibilities have been expanded to include oversight and fiscal analysis in several areas of Virginia government.

JLARC uses a structured but flexible process for planning agency work. This workplan, which is prepared annually and submitted to the Commission for review and approval, represents a staff proposal for a feasible work schedule. The workplan may be revised to reflect changes in organizational priorities and needs. The sections that follow cover JLARC's major work functions: Studies, Ongoing Evaluation and Oversight, Fiscal Analysis, and Support.

Proposed Commission meeting schedule 2025

May 5	JLARC Workplan JLARC Impacts: Actions Taken on Report Recommendations APA Workplan
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June 4	Potential transfer of DJJ to HHR Workforce and industry incentives APA report on FY24 work
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July 14	VRS Commonwealth Savers School library book removal
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August	<i>No meeting</i>
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September 8	VITA
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October 6	Community college landscape & mission impact Capital construction & maintenance State spending Unimplemented JLARC recommendations
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November 10	Correctional education & vocational training Shifting demographic trends Economic development incentives
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December 15	K-12 accountability Effects of gun violence VRS State Spending: K-12 Standards of Quality
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2 Studies

Major research studies are the agency's primary work. JLARC's topic selection subcommittee recommends research topics, which are then approved by the full Commission. JLARC also receives studies through joint resolutions passed by the General Assembly.

Studies follow project-specific workplans, which are developed by study teams and reviewed by JLARC's project review team—director, associate directors, methodologist, and publications staff—to ensure that high-quality work can be completed in the time allotted. The project review team examines each project at every major stage of the research process. JLARC staff are assigned to study teams on a full-time basis for the duration of the project.

Studies to be completed in 2025 are summarized below. Study resolutions are included in the appendix.

Potential transfer of DJJ to HHR

Mandate: Commission resolution

Scheduled publication: June 2025

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), an agency within Virginia's public safety secretariat, has a mission to "protect the public by preparing court-involved and committed youth to be successful citizens." DJJ operates 30 court service units and one juvenile correctional center. Over the past decade, DJJ has transformed its programming with the goal of achieving the proper balance between punishment and rehabilitation. Court-involved youth and their families frequently receive services from agencies in the health and human resources secretariat, which in some cases have similar objectives and delivery models to DJJ's rehabilitative programming.

The study team will examine the advantages and disadvantages of transferring DJJ from the public safety secretariat to the health and human resources secretariat. The team will consider potential benefits to youth and their families, advantages and disadvantages to public safety, and potential logistical challenges and costs that policymakers should consider.

School library book removal

Mandate: SJ 251 (2025 session)

Scheduled publication: July 2025

The General Assembly directed JLARC to survey each school division to collect information about books that have been removed from school libraries since July 2020. The study resolution specifies that JLARC ask divisions which specific books have been removed and the processes and basis for removing them from school libraries. JLARC is working with Virginia Commonwealth University's Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory to develop and administer the survey.

Capital construction & maintenance

Mandate: Commission resolution

Scheduled publication: October 2025

Virginia owns several thousand buildings, about 40 percent of which belong to higher education institutions. These facilities are managed either by the Department of General Services or by the agency or institution that owns the facilities. Each year, the state budget provides funding for maintenance and renovation of these buildings and sometimes for new construction. Most of the state's capital asset funding goes to higher education institutions.

Many state buildings are aging, and some require major repairs or replacements because they have exceeded their useful life. Available funding is never sufficient to meet all the state's capital needs, so projects must be prioritized. To allocate funding effectively, the General Assembly and governor need reliable, actionable information on the scope and urgency of these needs. Yet, the accuracy of data on the condition of state-owned buildings has been questioned, and agencies' capacity to identify and plan for capital projects varies. In addition, delays are common even once funding has been allocated, raising questions about the efficiency of the capital outlay process and agencies' project management capabilities.

This study will assess the availability and usefulness of data on the condition and use of state facilities. If sufficient data exists, the team will evaluate the overall condition of capital assets, estimate the scale of deferred maintenance, and identify agencies and assets with the most pressing capital needs. The study team will also examine how maintenance funds are allocated and whether agencies use them effectively and strategically, and how agencies plan and prioritize capital projects. Additionally, the team will review the roles of key stakeholders—including the Department of Planning and Budget, the Department of General Services, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia—in the capital outlay process. Finally, the study will identify delayed projects and determine whether changes to the state's capital outlay process could help prevent delays.

Community college landscape & mission impact

Mandate: Commission resolution

Scheduled publication: October 2025

The higher education landscape is changing and could impact Virginia's Community College System (VCCS). Because of a slowing birthrate, the number of high school graduates peaked this year and will decline in future years. In addition, more potential students and families believe a four-year college degree may not be worth the cost, and there is growing student interest in technical and vocational-focused training and credentials that can directly lead to a job. The pandemic also changed student expectations about the delivery of instruction; last year nearly three-fourths of VCCS students took at least some classes online.

The study team will research how well VCCS is adapting to this changing landscape across community colleges' various programs. Specifically, the team will assess the use of and student outcomes for online classes; outcomes and potential barriers for community college students seeking to transfer to a four-year institution; outcomes for career and technical education students, including whether courses and programs align with high demand jobs statewide and in their region; and the availability of dual enrollment programs and the challenges, if any, associated with the goal of increasing the availability of dual enrollment.

The team will also evaluate how well the system monitors the sustainability of each individual community college, especially in the context of the changing higher education landscape.

Correctional education & vocational training

Mandate: Commission resolution

Scheduled publication: November 2025

State law requires the Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide educational and vocational programs to inmates in DOC facilities. DOC is required to determine appropriate program assignments for inmates, including career and technical education, work activities and employment, academic activities, and substance abuse treatment, "as may be necessary to assist prisoners in the successful transition to free society and gainful employment." Inmates are required to participate in such programs 40 hours per week. As of December 2024, DOC offered 35 different academic or job training programs across its 37 prison facilities. Research supports that inmates who participate in these programs have a lower recidivism rate because they are more likely to be employed after their prison release. However, there is evidence of unmet demand for these programs across DOC's facilities.

The study will examine the employment and recidivism outcomes of inmates who complete DOC's correctional education programs, assess the demand for and availability

of adult basic education and job training programs across DOC's correctional facilities, determine whether job training programs align with the skills that are in demand by Virginia employers, and examine the demand for and availability of post-secondary education programming through DOC. The study team will also assess the availability of adult basic education and job training programs at local and regional jails in Virginia, particularly for state-responsible inmates. The study will identify opportunities for expanding these programs at prisons and jails and evaluate the challenges and costs to doing so.

Shifting demographic trends

Mandate: Commission resolution

Scheduled publication: November 2025

Demographics—the population and its characteristics—can have a major influence on a state's economy and demand for government services, such as social services or K-12 schools. Shifts or changes in long-term demographic trends can have major impacts, making it important for governments to fully understand implications of demographic trends. For example, Virginia's population growth has recently slowed, which can potentially affect state revenues and demand for state government services. In addition, people have generally been leaving the state's large metro areas and moving into smaller metro areas and rural counties.

The study team is working with the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service to analyze and summarize key demographic shifts occurring in Virginia. The team will use numerous datasets (e.g., IRS Statistics of Income, U.S. Census American Community Survey) to identify trends such as in- and out-migration, births, and deaths. Within these trends, when data is available, the team will examine the relevant demographic characteristics of the individuals contributing to these trends, including race and ethnicity, education levels, employment, income, and age. The team will also report on the potential revenue and economic impacts of these trends and identify government functions that may be affected.

K-12 accountability

Mandate: Commission resolution

Scheduled publication: December 2025

The Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) passed new K-12 public school accountability regulations in October 2024—called the School Performance and Support Framework. The board sought to develop a new framework because the prior "accreditation system was not adequately setting high expectations for schools and students," according to its comprehensive plan. The framework will be used to measure school performance

beginning with the 2024–25 school year. Each school’s scores will be public, and there are implications for schools depending on their performance category. VBOE and divisions likely will recognize schools in higher performance categories. In contrast, schools in lower performance categories may be required to develop improvement plans and may be eligible for federal or state support.

The study team will review academic research literature and federal requirements to identify the purpose of K–12 school accountability systems and how they should be designed to measure and encourage positive performance. The team will collect opinions from school divisions and academic experts, and information from other states, to evaluate the framework’s individual components (e.g., math SOL scores) and weighting of each component (e.g., 20 percent of total middle school score).

The team will evaluate the methodological soundness of the framework, the framework’s implementation, and the implications of the label a school receives (e.g., “off track”) based on its total performance score. The team will attempt to compare planned support and resources for lower scoring schools—to the extent these are developed and released during the timeframe of this study—to what research indicates can effectively improve school performance.

Effects of gun violence

Mandate: HJ 76 (2024)/Commission resolution

Scheduled publication: December 2025

This study on the effects of gun violence was directed to JLARC through House Joint Resolution 76 in the 2024 session and approved by the Commission that fall. The resolution directs the JLARC study team to consider not only fatal shootings, but also other firearm-involved crimes and incidents that include victims who are injured by gunshot wounds, are shot at but not wounded, or threatened by a firearm. Gun violence can take various forms, often categorized by the nature of injury and whether the act is criminal. Interpersonal gun violence is commonly divided into “community gun violence” and intimate partner or domestic violence. Community gun violence, which is concentrated in cities and population centers, typically occurs in public spaces between individuals who are neither related nor in a relationship.

Virginia has lower rates of firearm-related deaths and injuries than many other states but has experienced substantial increases since 2019. Most firearm deaths have been concentrated in the cities of Richmond, Portsmouth, Petersburg, Norfolk, and Roanoke. Suicides account for the majority of firearm deaths, followed by homicides.

The study will examine the prevalence of gun violence in Virginia, how it has changed over time, and which Virginia communities are most affected. It will also assess the direct and indirect effects of gun violence on individual and community health, as well as on community institutions like schools and the criminal justice system. The study

will also explore the economic effects of gun violence on communities and how related costs—such as Medicaid-funded health care—are borne by the public. Additionally, the study will identify programs in Virginia and other states aimed at addressing these impacts and, when possible, evaluate their effectiveness.

3 Ongoing Evaluation & Oversight

JLARC provides ongoing evaluation and oversight for the General Assembly. The General Assembly has directed JLARC to evaluate and oversee the following topics. Two JLARC staff members are permanently assigned to evaluation and oversight. Other staff members are assigned as needed.

Economic development incentives

The Appropriation Act directs JLARC to review and evaluate economic development initiatives and policies on an ongoing basis. The Commission approves the incentives to evaluate each year. JLARC contracts with the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service to perform evaluations. Evaluations analyze

- economic development incentives, such as grants and tax preferences;
- success by businesses in meeting goals in return for incentives;
- the economic benefits of incentives; and
- effectiveness of incentives in influencing business activity. JLARC staff will present two reports in 2025:

Evaluation of workforce and industry incentives

Scheduled briefing: June 2025

Annual economic development incentives report

Scheduled briefing: November 2025

Virginia Retirement System

The Virginia Retirement System Oversight Act (Chapter 10 of Title 30 of the Code of Virginia) authorizes oversight of the Virginia Retirement System (VRS). Under this authority, JLARC evaluates

- the structure and governance of the retirement system;
- the structure of the investment portfolio;
- investment practices, policies, and performance;
- the actuarial policy and the actuarial soundness of the trust fund; and
- the administration and management of the retirement system.

JLARC staff conduct independent research and attend meetings of the VRS Board of Trustees and committees to observe agency and board operations. JLARC staff will present the following briefings and reports in 2025. Staff will also prepare an update to the biennial legislator's guide for 2026.

VRS Oversight Update
Scheduled briefing: July 2025

VRS Oversight Report
Scheduled publication: December 2025

Legislator's Guide to VRS
Scheduled publication: February 2026

Commonwealth Savers Plan

The Commonwealth Savers Plan Oversight Act (Chapter 51 of Title 30 of the Code of Virginia) authorizes oversight of Commonwealth Savers (formerly Virginia529). Under this authority, JLARC evaluates

- the structure and governance of the Commonwealth Savers Plan;
- the structure of investment portfolios;
- investment practices, policies, and performance;
- the actuarial policy and the actuarial soundness of the defined benefit college savings programs; and
- the administration and management of the plan.

JLARC staff conduct independent research and attend meetings of the Commonwealth Savers Board and committees to observe agency and board operations. JLARC staff will provide the following report in 2025 and will prepare an update to the biennial legislator's guide for 2026.

Independent actuarial audit of the defined benefit college savings programs
Scheduled publication: July 2025

Legislator's Guide to Commonwealth Savers
Scheduled publication: February 2026

Virginia Information Technologies Agency

The Appropriation Act directs JLARC to review and evaluate the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) on an ongoing basis. Under this authority, JLARC evaluates

- the state's IT infrastructure outsourcing contracts;
- VITA's planning and oversight responsibilities; and
- VITA's procurement services and oversight of state agency procurement activities.

JLARC staff conduct independent analysis and attend IT advisory and agency relations meetings to observe VITA's operations. JLARC staff will present the following briefing in 2025:

Update on VITA

Scheduled briefing: September 2025

Other evaluation support provided for the General Assembly

JLARC provides additional evaluation and support services for the General Assembly as directed by the Code of Virginia or the Appropriation Act. JLARC staff

- provide reviews of proposed criminal justice legislation to determine the potential disproportionate racial and ethnic impacts in the Commonwealth;
- review the compliance of higher education institutions with their management agreements;
- provide other evaluation support to the General Assembly as requested.

Several JLARC staff members work part time on other evaluation and support. Activities and reports for this year include:

Racial and ethnic impact statements for proposed criminal justice legislation

Upon request of the House or Senate Courts of Justice chairs

In prior years, JLARC conducted assessments of bills that would mandate insurance coverage of specific health-care benefits. Legislation enacted during the 2025 session (HB 2372) transfers this responsibility to the Joint Commission on Health Care starting in July 2025.

4 Fiscal Analysis

JLARC provides fiscal analysis services to the General Assembly. Under this function, JLARC staff

- provide an independent assessment of the fiscal impact of proposed legislation and executive orders;
- report on state spending and how Virginia compares nationwide;
- monitor and provide technical support for major forecasts related to the state budget; and
- provide other fiscal analysis support to the General Assembly as requested.

Several JLARC staff members work part time on fiscal analysis. Activities and reports for this year include:

Second opinion fiscal impact reviews of proposed legislation
Upon request of a committee chair

Fiscal impact reviews of executive orders issued by the governor
Upon request of a committee chair

Annual state spending report
Scheduled briefing: October 2025

Annual state spending on the K–12 Standards of Quality
Scheduled briefing: December 2025

Annual Virginia compared with the other states publication
Scheduled publication: January 2026

Monitoring of major expenditure forecasts
Ongoing and periodic

Review of internal service funds
Upon request of JLARC, House Appropriations Committee or Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee chairs

Debt Capacity Advisory Committee
Participation by JLARC director

5 Support Functions

Several functions support the research and oversight work of JLARC staff: research methods, publications, business and administrative support, and staff training and development.

Research methods

JLARC's methodologist supports teams in developing and evaluating state programs and agencies. The methodologist

- supports the conceptualization, design, and implementation of research methods and techniques to improve the accuracy and validity of findings;
- advises study teams on data collection, approaches to analysis, and statistical methods;
- leads complex or critical analyses for teams;
- reviews work products for methodological soundness and accuracy of interpretation;
- develops and implements training to enhance staff capabilities;
- provides technical assistance for the fiscal analysis function; and
- serves as a member of the project review team.

Publications

JLARC's two-person publications team supports the study teams and advances communication of JLARC's work to the legislature and to the public. The publications team

- participates in project review during the development of reports and briefing materials;
- edits reports and other documents for clarity, logic, usage, and style;
- contributes to the design of graphics;
- handles design and layout of JLARC documents and publications;
- maintains staff resources for writing and graphics; and
- oversees output and distribution of JLARC publications online and in print.

The JLARC publications team maintains the JLARC website, making sure that public information is current and accurate.

Business operations and administrative support

JLARC's business operations are carried out by a two-person team. The business manager oversees daily operations of the function, which include

- executing the agency's annual budget and ensuring effective internal financial controls;
- providing human resources, payroll, and benefits services to agency staff;
- managing the agency's fixed assets inventory;
- managing agency records and archives;
- arranging travel for site visits;
- completing administrative preparation, minutes, and follow-up for Commission meetings;
- coordinating staff recruitment efforts;
- coordinating agency updates on implementation of JLARC recommendations;
- and providing administrative support to study teams as needed.

Staff training and development

Staff training activities ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their work, improve their individual performance, and contribute to the organization's overall performance. JLARC offers several opportunities to help staff meet their training needs and to address organization-wide training needs.

In 2025, training may include:

- in-house training for staff on selected topics, to be led by external experts and trainers or experienced and skilled JLARC staff members;
- professional development opportunities offered by the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society at its annual conference; and
- webinars relevant to the work of the agency, available through the National Conference of State Legislatures and other professional organizations.

Appendix: Study resolutions

Study Resolution

Transfer of the Department of Juvenile Justice to the Health and Human Resources Secretariat

Authorized by the Commission on November 13, 2023

WHEREAS, the Department of Juvenile Justice provides accountability and interventions that improve the lives of court-involved youths, and prepare them for success as productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, in contrast with adult criminal law which is punitive, juvenile law is intended to be remedial and affords juvenile and domestic relations judges more discretion in handling delinquent behavior than in adult criminal law; and

WHEREAS, many youths admitted into a Department of Juvenile Justice direct care program may have a mental health disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or a substance use disorder and have been prescribed psychotropic medication at some point during their lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to study the feasibility, costs, and benefits of transferring responsibility for the Department of Juvenile Justice from the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

JLARC shall make recommendations as necessary and may review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Department of Juvenile Justice, and Offices of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, and Secretary of Health and Human Resources 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 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.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 251

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the removal of certain books from public school libraries. Report.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 29, 2025
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2025

WHEREAS, the libraries in the Commonwealth's public schools are an important source of learning and exploration for students in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the books in circulation in the libraries of the Commonwealth's public schools are selected and curated by professionally trained school librarians and media specialists; and

WHEREAS, there are times at which some parents of public school students object to the inclusion of certain books in public school libraries while other parents support or approve the inclusion of such books in public school libraries; and

WHEREAS, § 22.1-16.8 of the Code of Virginia was enacted by the 2022 Session of the General Assembly for the purpose of directing the Department of Education to adopt model policies, and each school board to adopt policies consistent with but that may be more comprehensive than such model policies, for ensuring the parental notification of any instructional material that includes sexually explicit content, as that term is defined in applicable law, and to provide parents the opportunity to request their children be provided, as an alternative, nonexplicit instructional material; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Education adopted the model policies required pursuant to § 22.1-16.8 of the Code of Virginia in August of 2022, which focused on books used in the classroom and specifically clarified that any books contained in public school libraries would, under such policies, be considered "instructional material" only if students were required to read such books for completion of an assignment or as a part of an academic or extracurricular educational program; and

WHEREAS, some school divisions subsequently removed books from circulation in public school libraries based on the school division's determination that such books contained sexually explicit content, in accordance with § 22.1-16.8 of the Code of Virginia, or based on the school division's determination that other content contained in such books was objectionable; and

WHEREAS, some of the decisions by school divisions to remove certain books from public school libraries were made upon the recommendation of "challenge committees," consisting of parents of students in the school division and school librarians or other media specialists, while in other cases, such decisions were made without any recommendation of a school librarian or media specialist and were, instead, made upon the direction of a school board, individual school board members, individual school principals, division superintendents, or other school administrators; and

WHEREAS, the variations in procedure, process, and standards for the removal of certain books from public school libraries by school divisions across the Commonwealth presents significant questions relating to compliance with § 22.1-16.8 of the Code of Virginia and the protection of the opportunities for learning and intellectual exploration created by public school libraries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the removal of certain books from public school libraries. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall focus its study on any books removed from public school libraries after July 1, 2020, based on certain content included in such books.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall survey each of the 135 school divisions in the Commonwealth to identify (i) which school divisions removed any books from a library in any of its public schools on the basis of certain content contained therein after July 1, 2020; (ii) for each removed book identified pursuant to clause (i): (a) the title, author, and any other identifying information; (b) the fiscal year of removal; (c) the name of the school from whose library such book was removed; (d) whether it was removed upon the recommendation of a "challenge committee" and, if not, whether it was removed at the direction of the school board or one or more school board members, a school principal, a division superintendent, or another school administrator; (e) how the review was initiated, the role of the school's librarian or media specialist in the removal process, and which, if any, other school board employees were involved in the removal process and the role each individual played; and (f) if § 22.1-16.8 of the Code of Virginia or a policy adopted in accordance therewith was used to justify such removal; (iii) which school divisions have appointed a committee or other body to review the content of books currently contained in or proposed book purchases for inclusion in public school libraries and, if so, whether (a) such committee or body includes a [school] librarian or media specialist employed by the school division and (b) the meetings of such committee or body are advertised and open to the public; and (iv) in consultation with

any relevant state agencies, what resources are available at the state level to support school administrators in making decisions relating to the removal of books from public school libraries.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission by local school divisions in the Commonwealth. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings by August 1, 2025, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than October 1, 2025. The executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

Study Resolution

State Capital Assets

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2024

WHEREAS, the Appropriation Act includes funding each biennium from a combination of general funds, non-general funds, and bond proceeds to maintain the state's existing capital assets and to plan and construct new assets (\$2.7 billion was provided for the FY24-26 biennium); and

WHEREAS, the Department of General Services (DGS) tracks the condition of the state's facilities using the M-R FIX system, and DGS received \$500,000 in FY25 to assess ways to improve the M-R FIX system; and

WHEREAS, the State Council for Education in Virginia maintains data on the utilization of higher education facilities; and

WHEREAS, funding for new capital projects is generally provided through a pool process in the Appropriation Act, and general funds for the maintenance of existing facilities are allocated using the M-R FIX system; and

WHEREAS, the Six-Year Capital Outlay Plan Advisory Committee produces a six-year capital outlay plan for state agencies and higher education institutions and monitors the funding for projects in the capital pools; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly should have a broad understanding of the state's capital needs, both for maintenance and new capital assets, when deciding how to prioritize and provide capital funding; and

WHEREAS, state agencies and higher education institutions reportedly vary in their success at completing capital projects in a timely fashion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the state's approach to planning, maintaining, and funding capital assets at its state agencies and higher education institutions. In conducting its study staff shall (i) determine the availability and usability of information on the condition and utilization of the state's capital assets; (ii) evaluate the process for identifying, prioritizing, planning for, and funding the maintenance of the state's existing capital assets, and identify whether the process could be improved; (iii) evaluate the process for identifying, prioritizing, planning for, and funding new capital assets, and identify whether the process could be improved; (iv) review the roles of the Six-Year Capital Outlay Plan Advisory Committee, the Department of General Services, the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia, and other key stakeholders in the state's capital outlay process; and (v) assess the reasons for why some capital projects are not completed in a timely manner, and determine how the timely and successful completion of capital projects can be improved.

JLARC may make recommendations as necessary and may review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Department of General Services, State Council for Higher Education in Virginia, the Department of Planning and Budget, and Department of Treasury 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 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.

Study Resolution

Virginia Community College System

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2024

WHEREAS, Virginia employers need a quality workforce including candidates with associate degrees and technical certifications and credentials, and wages for individuals without four year degrees have been rising after decades of stagnation; and

WHEREAS, despite these workforce needs and trends, community college enrollment has declined 23% over the past decade, and 11 colleges lost more than 20% of their enrollment; and

WHEREAS, the Appropriation Act specifies that funds available to the Virginia Community College System be reallocated to accommodate changes in enrollment and other cost factors at each of the community colleges; and

WHEREAS, the 2024 General Assembly established the College and Career Ready Virginia Fund and required local school divisions to offer no cost dual enrollment courses for the Passport Program and the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program; and

WHEREAS, VCCS's six-year plan discusses the community college system's enrollment declines, and details a plan to transform the system through a focus on (1) adults who need to reskill or upskill to improve their employment options, and (2) high school students who want to earn a postsecondary credential to improve their employment options; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review how well the Virginia Community College System is adapting to the changing higher education landscape. In conducting its review, staff shall assess: (i) trends in enrollment and its composition, and its impact on tuition and fee revenue; (ii) student outcomes and how well the community college system provides students the necessary skills and credentials to meet the workforce needs of Virginia employers; (iii) the use of virtual instruction and other innovative approaches to fully utilize instructional capacity and meet student needs; (iv) opportunities offered to high school students to gain a postsecondary credential or degree through concurrent enrollment or other strategies; (v) ways to gain operational efficiencies given trends in enrollment and its composition; and (vi) how other states have adapted their community college systems to improve student outcomes, programmatic alignment with workforce needs, or operational efficiency.

JLARC shall make recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Virginia Community College System, State Board for Community Colleges, State Council for Higher Education in Virginia, local school divisions, public four year institutions, Virginia Office of Educational Economics, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement, Department of Planning and Budget, and Secretary of Education 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 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.

Inmate Education and Vocational Training Programs

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2024

WHEREAS, the Code of Virginia directs the operation of educational and vocational programs in all correctional institutions; and

WHEREAS, the average daily population in the state prison system has been about 23,000 in recent years, and many state responsible inmates are housed in regional or local jails; and

WHEREAS, inmates after they are released have unemployment rates at least four times higher than the general population; and

WHEREAS, research suggests that participation in education and vocational training programs and successful employment post-release lower the likelihood of reoffending; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Corrections strategic plan emphasizes the importance of opportunities to participate in educational and vocational programs and the promotion of post-release employment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the availability and effectiveness of inmate education and vocational training programs, including those that focus on providing life skills necessary for success. In conducting its review, staff shall: (i) inventory the programs at each correctional institution and identify how they are funded and staffed; (ii) evaluate whether the programs are sufficiently available and appropriately designed to meet the needs of inmates and the Virginia labor market; (iii) evaluate participant outcomes, to include employment, academic or industry credentials, or further education; (iv) compare Virginia's programs to evidence-based and best practices; and (v) evaluate the feasibility and potential effectiveness of providing educational and vocational services in local and regional jails.

JLARC shall make recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Virginia Department of Corrections, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Community College System, Virginia Compensation Board, Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission, Virginia State Police, the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement, and local sheriffs' departments, 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 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.

Study Resolution

Shifting State Demographics

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2024

WHEREAS, between 2020 and 2023 Virginia's population grew by less than one percent, which is similar to national trends but less than some nearby states; and

WHEREAS, statewide trends mask regional and local variation in population changes; for example, the regions of Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia have experienced out-migration while the Richmond metro area and rural areas have experienced in-migration, and local population changes ranged from an increase of 11.9 percent in New Kent County to a decrease of -5.7 percent in Buchanan County; and

WHEREAS, demographic analysis shows that Virginians are moving out of the state's large metro areas and into smaller metro areas and rural counties, and in 2023 the majority of Virginia's rural counties had more people move into them than out; and

WHEREAS, such trends are likely to impact important economic indicators (such as housing costs), and demand for state and local services (such as through public school enrollments); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review Virginia's historical and projected demographic shifts and their impact on the state and regional economies. In conducting its study staff shall (i) identify trends in in- and out-migration, births, and deaths at the state, local, and regional levels; (ii) examine the relevant demographic characteristics of the individuals contributing to these trends, including race and ethnicity, education levels, employment and income, and age; (iii) estimate the revenue and economic impacts of these trends on the state, its regions, and localities; (iv) identify potential functions of government that could be impacted by these trends; and (v) identify topics for future JLARC studies.

JLARC may make recommendations as necessary and may review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority, the Virginia Department of Taxation, the Virginia Department of Health, and Virginia local governments shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC may use consultants as necessary to complete the study. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of 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.

Study Resolution

K-12 Accreditation

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2024

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Virginia directs that the General Assembly “shall seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained;” and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has granted the Virginia Board of Education statutory authority to provide general supervision of the public school system, and established the Standards of Quality consisting of seven standards related to instruction, staffing, student achievement, and accreditation; and

WHEREAS, JLARC’s Virginia’s K-12 Funding Formula (2023) addressed funding and the staffing components of the Standards of Quality, but did not address accreditation; and

WHEREAS, the Standards of Accreditation are intended to ensure an effective educational program in all of Virginia’s public schools; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education’s “Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia” were adopted in 2024, replaced the previous accreditation standards in place since 2017, and will be fully implemented in the 2025-2026 school year; and

WHEREAS, Virginia public K-12 schools are also subject to Federal accountability requirements as outlined in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); and

WHEREAS, some school officials have expressed concern about the new Standards of Accreditation, including how they will be implemented and the implications of a school not being fully accredited; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review Virginia’s recently revised accreditation standards for public K-12 education. In conducting its review, staff shall determine: (i) the appropriate role and purpose of school accreditation in ensuring a quality education system and incentivizing school performance; (ii) whether Virginia’s system uses appropriate criteria, and is sufficiently transparent and understandable; (iii) whether the implications and consequences of accreditation results strike the appropriate balance between accountability, assistance, and improving educational quality; and (iv) whether Virginia’s school accreditation standards and process are sufficiently aligned with federal and other applicable accountability frameworks.

JLARC may make recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Board of Education, Virginia Department of Education, and all public school boards and divisions, 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 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.

2024 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 76

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the social, physical, emotional, and economic effects of gun violence on communities across the Commonwealth. Report.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 12, 2024

Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2024

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Health Statistics, 4,482 Virginians died by firearm between 2018 and 2021, and the firearm homicide rate in Virginia increased by 21 percent in that time; and

WHEREAS, in addition to fatal shootings, gun violence includes other firearm-involved crimes and incidents in which a victim may suffer from non-fatal gunshot wounds, may be shot at but not wounded, or may be threatened with a brandished firearm that is not fired; and

WHEREAS, not only does gun violence result in physical harm, it can also lead to long-term adverse effects on the overall health and well-being of individuals, as well as lasting social and economic impacts on communities; and

WHEREAS, in order to reduce gun violence and its enduring consequences, it is important to understand the extent of such social, physical, emotional, and economic effects on communities in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the social, physical, emotional, and economic effects of gun violence on communities across the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall examine the impact of gun violence on (i) the overall physical health of individuals living in affected communities, (ii) the mental and emotional health of individuals living in affected communities, and (iii) the social and economic health of communities impacted by gun violence and shall consider and propose policy recommendations to address gun violence and its effects.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2024, and for the second year by November 30, 2025, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

ENROLLED

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