

Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts in Education

SAMPLE LETTER TEMPLATE

Letters/fax should be sent to local delegates and senators and members of the House and Senate Education Committees. To find your local delegate and senator visit the Virginia General Assembly webpage: conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/main?openform

The important issues are: the Economics and Personal Finance requirement is an unfunded mandate which will have negative implications for local education agency budgets; the graduation credit will impact ALL fine arts disciplines and other elective classes; and, the new graduation requirement will have the unintended consequence of limiting student opportunities to prepare themselves for careers and post-secondary education.

While personalizing your letter is useful, citing the specific comments listed below or the talking points provided will present a consistent message. As a sample, written comments could be:

Dear Delegate/Senator,

I am writing with concern for the implementation of the Virginia Board of Education's Economics and Personal Finance graduation credit scheduled to become effective July 1, 2011. While I believe the Economics and Personal Finance graduation credit should be repealed, if the credit is to become effective, I support the intent of HB 622.

Allow me to cite several examples of the impact on fine arts classes and other electives, if the Economics and Personal Finance graduation credit becomes effective as approved by the Virginia Board of Education:

1. The new Economics and Personal Finance requirement imposes an unfunded mandate during a difficult budget situation for local education agencies. School divisions are facing choices to maintain existing programs while implementing new requirements. Resources required to procure textbooks and hire and train teachers will, without additional fiscal support from the state, require a reallocation of existing monies at a time when budgets are being cut and funding for localities is falling short of the amount needed to sustain current levels of programming.
2. This additional graduation requirement would adversely affect the elective options in high school making it even more difficult for a student to elect a four-year sequence in the arts or any other career choice sequence which requires maintaining skills and practice throughout high school.
3. If the proposed Economics and Personal Finance graduation credit is implemented as initially approved, the strong potential exists for fine arts programs and other elective offerings to be reduced or eliminated.
4. Reduction or elimination of fine arts programs and other electives, coupled with drastically reduced local school budgets, music, visual arts, theatre arts, dance arts and other elective programs will struggle to meet the higher level Standards of Learning; an issue to be shared across the curriculum.

We urge that the Economics and Personal Finance credit requirement be withdrawn and, to ensure that students have fiscal and economic knowledge and understanding by graduation, that statewide mathematics and social science

Standards of Learning, which currently have aspects of the proposed additional course of study, be expanded to include the additional economics and personal finance content. In addition, it would be well to note that a number of electives, including Career and Technical Education courses in business and entrepreneurship also currently address aspects of the proposed courses.

If, on the other hand, the decision is made to proceed with the implementation of this additional course requirement, options should be explored which will alleviate the impact on students' abilities to prepare themselves for chosen careers and/or post secondary opportunities.

Options could include, but not be limited to, an extended day and/or middle school and on-line options for meeting the economics and personal finance course requirement.

Please keep in mind the long-term impact of the proposed Economics and Personal Finance graduation credit. Increasingly, with this unfunded mandate, local school boards and school divisions will face severe choices regarding what to keep and cut from their budgets. Regrettably, this may well become the norm for a number of years. The end result is a net loss for our students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joe Jones
1234 Main Street
Hoptown, VA 25555

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Please encourage all, who will and are not prohibited from doing so, to participate in this effort. This would include teachers, administrators, parents, students, and interested citizens. Keep in mind if the regulations as proposed are adopted, they will become law.