



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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December 16, 2025

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, Third Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building, Room 1223
201 North 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building, Room 1404
P. O. Box 396
Richmond, VA 23218

The Honorable Sam Rasoul
Chair, House Education Committee
General Assembly Building, Room 910
201 North 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Ghazala F. Hashmi
Chair, Senate Education and Health Committee
General Assembly Building, Room 616
PO Box 396
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin, Delegates Torian, and Rasoul, and Senators Lucas and Hashmi,

I am pleased to submit the enclosed report on the Future of the Care of School-Age Children in Virginia, as required by enactment language from Chapter 328 (2025 Acts of Assembly) and Appropriation Act Item 125.10.I (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly). The specific language of the Chapter 328 (2025 Acts of Assembly) mandate is as follows:

2. That the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in partnership with the Secretary of Education, shall establish a work group to review health and safety expectations for out-of-school time programs, as defined in § 22.1-289.02 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act. Specifically, the work group shall make recommendations to (i) reduce regulations while ensuring that all school-age children enrolled in out-of-school time programs are kept healthy and safe; (ii) ensure fairness as it relates to which out-of-school time programs are required to be licensed and which are exempt pursuant to subdivision B 11 of § 22.1-289.030 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act; and (iii) implement changes in a way that does not jeopardize services for school-age children enrolled in out-of-school time programs. The work group shall include representatives of school divisions, 21st Century

Community Learning Center grantees, private child care providers, the Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time, local parks and recreation entities, the YMCA, Communities in Schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other organizations that provide out-of-school time programming. The work group shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health by December 1, 2025.

The specific language of the Appropriation Act Item 125.10.I (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly) mandate is as follows:

I. The Early Childhood Care and Education Commission shall review and recommend:

1. Adjustments to CCSP reimbursement rates for school age children and the appropriateness of continuing to provide services through CCSP to school age children. Such review must also include an update on the current structure of publicly-funded out-of-school time learning and extracurricular programs and should evaluate how to: (i) maximize public dollars while ensuring parent choice; (ii) quantify impact and return on investment including evaluating cost and cost factors in comparison to birth-to-five programming; (iii) strengthen quality of afterschool and summer options and whether a statewide measurement system is needed; (iv) identify out-of-school time deserts; and (v) develop innovative approaches to reduce deserts, better support working parents, and ensure sustainability. In conducting this review, the Commission shall consult representatives of school divisions, 21st Century Learning grantees, private childcare providers, Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time, local Parks and Recreation entities, the YMCA, Communities in Schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other non-profit organizations that provide out-of-school time programming.

2. Approaches to maximize state and federal resources by adjusting income eligibility requirements to reflect regional costs of living variations.

The Commission shall provide a report on its recommendations to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees by December 1, 2025.

It should be noted that a summary of this report was shared with the full Early Childhood Care and Education Commission at its October 22, 2025 and December 3, 2025 meetings to solicit feedback and the final draft was approved by the Commission's Steering Committee following the December 3, 2025 meeting. Please direct questions to Jenna Conway, Chief of Early Learning and Specialized Populations at Jenna.Conway@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,



Emily Anne Gullickson, M.Ed. J.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

c: The Honorable Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Virginia Secretary of Education

REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL-AGE CARE IN VIRGINIA

Item 125.10.I (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly) and
Chapter 328 (2025 Acts of Assembly)



REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL-AGE CARE IN VIRGINIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) established a joint workgroup on the future of out-of-school-time (OST) care for school-age children.

- Enactment language from Chapter 328 (2025 Acts of Assembly) directed the VDOE to convene a workgroup with a group of key stakeholders to review health and safety expectations for OST programs. Chapter 328 directed the workgroup to report findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health by December 1, 2025.
- Appropriation Act Item 125.10.I (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly) directed the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to review and recommend adjustments to how the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) supports school-age children. Item 125.10.I directed the commission to consult with OST stakeholder groups in developing recommendations, due to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees by December 1, 2025.

Given Chapter 32 and Item 125.10.I named the same organizations as needing representation in the development of recommendations for OST care, the VDOE convened a single workgroup to address both directives. This report summarizes workgroup activities and presents the recommendations formulated by the workgroup and presented to the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for review on October 22, 2025 and December 3, 2025. The final draft of this report was approved by the Commission's Steering Committee following the December 3, 2025 meeting.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were put forward by the OST workgroup:

Health and Safety

1. Increase stakeholder understanding of licensure, why it matters, and exemptions from licensure among families, providers, and General Assembly members.
2. Explore ways in which VDOE can further support, not just regulate, providers to meet health and safety requirements.
3. Explore alternatives to licensure that provide assurance of health and safety and may be efficient for providers.
4. Explore potential additional statutory and regulatory changes that provide assurance of age-appropriate health and safety while minimizing burden.

Access

1. Identify strategies to ensure that all existing sources of funding are fully maximized.
2. Collect, analyze, and disseminate data to guide a collective understanding of supply, demand, costs, and outcomes associated with the provision of OST services.
3. Explore funding levers to increase revenue to support OST services.

Quality

1. Explore strategies to support the OST workforce by strengthening personnel knowledge, skills, and abilities.
2. Consider strategies to encourage and guide the use of quality standards among programs.
3. Explore the feasibility of developing a Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) system for OST care in Virginia, and practices to support engagement in a QRIS system.
4. Develop statewide data collection to determine existing quality programs and isolate factors influencing quality.

INTRODUCTION: DIRECTIVES FROM THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND WORKGROUP APPROACH

Legislative and budget directives from Virginia's 2025 General Assembly session prompted the VDOE to establish a joint workgroup on the future of OST care for school-age children.

Chapter 328 (2025 Acts of Assembly) added a definition of an out-of-school time (OST) program in Va. Code § 22.1-289.02, stipulating that an OST program is a program that (i) serves only school-age children; (ii) operates primarily before or after regular school hours, during the summer, or at times when school is not normally in session; and (iii) is offered for the purpose of promoting expanded childhood learning and enrichment, child and youth development, or educational, recreational, or character-building activities. Additionally, Chapter 328 created a new exemption from licensure for certain OST programs. Lastly, the enactment language directed the VDOE to convene a workgroup with a group of key stakeholders to review health and safety expectations for OST programs, producing recommendations related to: 1) reduce regulations while ensuring health and safety; 2) ensure fairness as it relates to which OST time programs are required to be licensed and which are exempt pursuant to subdivision B 11 of Va. Code § 22.1-289.030; and 3) implement changes forward in a way that does not jeopardize services for school-age children enrolled in OST programs.

Item 125.10.I of the Appropriation Act directed the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to review and recommend adjustments to how the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) supports school-age children, including adjustments to the CCSP reimbursement rates for school-age children and the appropriateness of continuing to provide services through the CCSP to school-age children. The charge included reviewing the current structure of publicly-funded OST learning and extracurricular programs, including evaluating how to: 1) maximize public dollars while ensuring parent choice; 2) quantify impact and return on investment including evaluating cost and cost factors in comparison to birth-to-five programming; 3) strengthen quality of afterschool and summer options and whether a statewide measurement system is needed; 4) identify OST deserts; 5) develop innovative approaches to reduce deserts, better support working parents, and ensure sustainability.

Both directives required the inclusion of representatives of school divisions, 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees, private child care providers, the Virginia Partnership for OST, local parks and recreation entities, the YMCA, Communities in Schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other organizations that provide OST programming.

Workgroup Approach

The VDOE facilitated a workgroup focused on OST care for school-age children, with three meetings convened between June and September 2025. Meetings included exercises to support engagement and relationship-building, as well as individual reflections, small-group discussions, and large-group share-outs with interactive opportunities supporting understanding of all small

groups' reflections. As directed by Chapter 328 and Item 125.10.I, members included representatives of school divisions, 21st Century Learning grantees, private childcare providers, Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time (V-POST), local Parks and Recreation entities, the YMCA, Communities in Schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other organizations that provide OST programming. A comprehensive list of specific organizations affiliated with these named groups and represented by members can be found in *Appendix A*.

Table 1: Timeline – OST Workgroup

| Date | Activity |
|-----------------------|---|
| Tuesday, June 24 | Meeting 1: System Landscape, Strengths, and Areas for Improvement |
| Thursday, July 24 | Meeting 2: Exploration of Models and Best Practices and Setting the Vision for the Future of OST |
| Tuesday, September 9 | Meeting 3: Short- and Long-Term Recommendations Towards the OST Vision |
| Wednesday, October 22 | Recommendations first reviewed by the Commission on ECCE during October meeting |
| Wednesday, December 3 | Recommendations reviewed by the Commission of ECCE during December meeting with referral to Steering Committee for final approval of report |

Meeting 1: System Landscape, Strengths, and Areas for Improvement

At the group's June meeting,

- Through presentations by and question and answer sessions with VDOE staff, members reviewed programs and settings that support OST/school-age care in Virginia, including funding levels, enrollment, unmet need, quality measurement/accreditation and regulatory content.
- Members discussed and identified strengths of existing programs, services, and regulatory structures, as well as barriers to maximizing family choice, addressing unmet needs, running a program, and growing supply.

Meeting 2: Exploration of Models and Best Practices, and Setting the Vision

At the group's July meeting,

- Students from the University of Virginia School of Law delivered presentations on national models and best practices for OST programming to inspire out-of-the-box thinking.
- Members collectively generated a future vision for OST services in Virginia, focused on the following questions:

- What strategies should Virginia consider to balance the dual goals of ensuring children's health and safety and minimizing burden?
- What approaches should Virginia consider to strengthen OST quality?
- What funding strategies should Virginia consider to strengthen OST programming?

Meeting 3: Short- and Long-Term Recommendations

At the group's September meeting,

- Members reviewed a set of broad and specific recommendations emerging from discussions from Meetings 1 and 2.
- Members refined the group's future vision and priorities and revised recommendations.

BACKGROUND: CURRENT STRUCTURE OF PUBLICLY-FUNDED OST PROGRAMS

Publicly-funded OST programs currently serve school-age children in a variety of settings across the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing both extracurricular learning and enrichment opportunities, and safe space and supervision for children with working parents. While demand for OST care is increasing, participation is decreasing. Nationwide, 11 million children from low-income households would participate in OST programs if they were available/accessible in their communities. In Virginia, over 600,000 children would participate in an afterschool program if it were available. Barriers to access include cost, transportation, program awareness and availability, as well as insufficient public funding to meet demand.

Census data estimates that there are over 800,000 children between the ages of 5-12 in Virginia, comprising 42% of children from birth to age 18—and the data shows that these children and their families need support outside of school:

- 1 in 5 children in grades K-6 are economically disadvantaged;
- 44% of 3rd graders score below proficient levels on statewide reading tests; and
- 7 in 10 children ages 5-12 have all available parents in the workforce.

Health and Safety

Virginia's OST options consist of multiple public and private providers that offer school-age care across settings, including family child care homes, child care centers, and schools. The *Code of Virginia* dictates which sites must be licensed or regulated, and which requirements apply. Most programs serving school-age children outside of school hours have some applicable health and

safety expectations related to attendance, emergency preparedness, and transportation safety. Some programs are subject to additional requirements related to staff-to-child ratios, background checks, staff qualifications, and first aid/CPR. Licensed programs have a much broader set of requirements, such as children’s and staff records, staff training, physical plant safety, square footage minimums, supervision, daily activities, preventing the spread of disease, medication safety, water safety, nutrition, and animal safety.

Table 2: Health and Safety Requirements by Site Type

| Licensed | License-Exempt with State Health and Safety Requirements | License-Exempt without State Health and Safety Requirements, but Subject to Safety Requirements of Another Organization |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-based programs (1-12 children) • Center-based programs without an exemption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntarily registered homes (1-4 children) • Unlicensed home-based and center-based programs participating in the subsidy program • Child day programs exempt per § 22.1-289.030 B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religiously exempt centers • Programs where school-age children can enter and leave without permission • 20-calendar day or less programs • Child minding services (commercial/ recreational or business) • Four-hour programs offered by accredited private schools • Military programs (on base or federal property or certified as a family care provider by a military branch) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs offered and staffed by local government entities (e.g., parks and recreation, public schools) - required to file with VDOE • OST programs affiliated with a national organization – not required to file with VDOE |

Quality

The Virginia Quality Birth to Five system (VQB5) is a nation-leading quality measurement and improvement system that monitors the quality of all publicly-funded birth-to-five classrooms. VQB5 quality ratings are based on two key indicators: 1) quality interactions, as measured by CLASS observations, and 2) quality curriculum, in alignment with Virginia’s Early Learning and

Development Standards. VQB5 participation is required at sites serving children ages birth-to-five that receive public funds, but only for infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms. VQB5-participating sites with classrooms serving only school-age children are not included in quality measurement.

Although various resources and quality measurement tools are available for OST programs serving school-age children, none are currently required by the Commonwealth. At the state level, VPOST developed its own Quality Standards for Virginia OST Programs, first released in 2017 and updated in 2024, consisting of ten standards: 1) active and engaged learning; 2) partnerships and networking; 3) inclusion and belonging; 4) support student success; 5) leadership and staff development; 6) relationships; 7) continuous improvement; 8) health and wellbeing; 9) safe environments; 10) child and youth voice. Each quality standard is accompanied by examples of observable indicators of that standard, but the standards are intentionally flexible and approachable to encourage program use.

Access

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program is the only federal funding stream dedicated to OST programs, providing multi-year federal grants to eligible organizations to support academic enrichment opportunities for children during non-school hours. In FY2024, the program was funded at \$1.3 billion, of which Virginia was allocated \$23.3 million. An additional \$3 million was allocated in the Virginia budget from State General Funds. As of June 2025, an estimated 10,740 elementary and middle school children were participating in 21st CCLC in Virginia, served by 44 grantees across 134 sites.

Funds are awarded on a competitive basis through a multi-year grant cycle. Priority is given to proposals that: 1) represent joint applications between at least one school division and at least one public or private community organization; 2) serve students in schools that are Priority Schools, Conditionally Accredited Reconstituted, or Accreditation Denied for the current school year; 3) serve students in elementary schools or middle schools; or 4) serve students who attend schools with a free and reduced-price lunch eligibility of 75% or greater. Allowable activities include academic enrichment, tutorial services, youth development programs, arts and music education, family engagement, and literacy services for families of participating students.

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the largest federal funding source for child care, administered as block grants to states, tribes, and territories to support programs for low-income, working families. Virginia uses CCDF funds to administer the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP), which provides vouchers to eligible working families to help them afford child care for children birth through age 12 (and older for children with disabilities) at an eligible provider of their choice. In May 2025, an estimated 19,289 school-age children were enrolled to receive child care assistance through the CCSP, totaling 44% of all children enrolled in CCSP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Workgroup on the Future of School-Age Care in Virginia offers the following recommendations in the interdependent areas of health and safety, quality, and access.

Health and Safety

Workgroup members offer the following recommendations regarding the health and safety of OST programming:

1. Increase stakeholder understanding of licensure, why it matters, and exemptions from licensure among families, providers, and legislators, such as through:
 - Ensuring parents receive information about health and safety requirements across multiple sources (e.g., website, at center or site)
 - Ensuring parents, providers, and elected officials receive information about the various child care options, including distinctions between licensed and unlicensed care and potential benefits of licensure
2. Explore ways in which VDOE can further support, not just regulate, providers to meet health and safety requirements, such as through:
 - Conducting stakeholder engagement sessions specifically with OST programs to determine barriers to licensure, incentives for licensure, and recommendations for exemptions that ensure health and safety
 - Continually improving online pre-service orientation training to ensure that OST staff are only required to train on relevant content
 - Continually strengthening VDOE staff capacity, including for onboarding new OST providers and supporting existing OST providers
 - Exploring support models such as technical assistance or coaching
 - Exploring financial support mechanisms for OST workforce development, such as optional training that enables staff to refine skills and develop leadership capacity
 - Exploring ways to ease financial burden associated with trainings such as emergency and medical trainings, including Medication Administration Training (MAT), insulin, and epilepsy trainings
 - Establishing an Office of OST Care at the VDOE to provide coordination and technical assistance regarding OST strategies, implementation, and best practices
3. Explore alternatives to licensure that provide assurance of health and safety and may be efficient for providers, such as:
 - Considering alternative registration process(es) that would include age-applicable minimum health and safety requirements rather than requiring licensure

- Considering opportunities for a third party to provide oversight or accreditation and engage in monitoring
4. Explore potential additional statutory and regulatory changes that provide assurance of age-appropriate health and safety while minimizing burden, such as through:
- Continuously review the existing licensing requirements and make common sense adjustments to reduce both agency and provider burden, particularly for providers that only serve school-age children (e.g., training on diapering and safe sleep for school-age children is unnecessary)
 - Exploring additional opportunities to support increased child-to-staff ratio, reduce training and administrative requirements, and reconsider how volunteers can be used to meet staffing shortages
 - Organizing a focus group of licensed and unlicensed providers to determine the barriers to licensure and strategies to minimize burden
 - Quantifying the costs of licensure as compared to other forms of regulation
 - Identifying settings (e.g., schools) where OST children are served without licensure during some portion of the day or year and determine how to ensure greater consistency in expectations for staff
 - Developing a streamlined or improved process to revising licensing regulations for OST sites or classrooms
 - Determining the feasibility and potential outcomes of new regulations through a pilot program(s)
 - Exploring a separate set of OST regulations for OST sites or classrooms
 - Modifying requirements (including in the *Code of Virginia*) for OST programs to increase flexibility and factor in the distinct developmental needs of school-age children
 - Identifying areas where additional training, such as inclusion and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act, may be helpful to support providers to ensure they serve (and do not turn away) children with special needs

Other Reflections on Health and Safety Recommendations

Members expressed a range of opinions about the above recommendations, with some members raising concerns about whether it is wise for the state to provide exemptions from minimum health and safety standards, and others questioning whether evidence shows that licensing improves OST health and safety. Similarly, some members questioned the potential lack of alignment or redundancy between national organizations' and state standards, as was the lack of specifics regarding the oversight and funding of third-party organizations tasked with or allowed to provide monitoring. Moreover, programs receiving funding from CCSP are required to adhere to state regulations that ensure adherence to health and safety requirements established by the federal government, most of which are closely aligned with health and safety standards for

licensed programs, a point raised by members questioning the benefit of state exemptions to programs that wish to participate in CCSP.

Overall, the health and safety discussions reflected tensions inherent in an OST landscape where multiple organizations are situated to provide health and safety oversight, such as the VDOE, local school divisions, local government agencies, private schools, and national organizations. Layers of oversight were perceived by some to be redundant in some places, but in other places were viewed as essential to avoid gaps in ensuring health and safety of children in OST. These tensions reflect the need for more information-gathering to inform the extent to which (i) statutory and regulatory protections ensure the health and safety of children in OST care, and (ii) programs are burdened by and/or benefit from existing statutes and regulations.

The implementation of specific solutions is made difficult by these layered complexities, as well as by the time and effort required by the regulatory process for updating health and safety standards. These difficulties also underscore the necessity of parent and stakeholder education to ensure family choices and programmatic decisions are well-informed.

Quality

Workgroup members offer the following recommendations regarding the quality of OST programming:

1. Explore strategies to support the OST workforce by strengthening personnel knowledge, skills, and abilities, such as:
 - Developing and/or endorsing a statewide “youth development” credential
 - Providing dedicated trainings, workshops, and/or professional development opportunities for OST staff, based on:
 - multiple stages of career (e.g., entry-level, part-time teenager through seasoned veteran working full-time)
 - varying needs and targeted outcomes across populations (e.g., children with special needs, children with trauma or other mental health needs)
 - Aligning professional development opportunities with improving on quality standards, should such standards be adopted
 - Offering targeted supports to improve academically focused OST programs’ alignment with and use of K-12 standards of learning (SOLs) to support instruction
 - Analyzing staff compensation and identifying strengths and gaps in the current landscape
 - Exploring strategies for promoting retention to ensure more quality and consistency for school-age children, including compensation strategies, incentives for performance, competencies, and/or credentialing
 - Promoting opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement among Virginia’s OST programs

2. Consider strategies to encourage and guide the use of quality standards among programs, such as:
 - Exploring the current use of existing quality standards for OST services, including VPOST and Weikart standards, to understand where they are already being used
 - Exploring potential alternative models, including a multi-year accreditation cycle, to ensure minimum program quality while minimizing burden
 - Identifying and promoting a set of state-approved high-quality standards that are suitable for a wide variety of OST program types throughout Virginia
 - Promoting self-assessments for programs to develop program evaluation and accountability measures
 - Dedicating resources for measuring and improving OST quality, including through exploring opportunities for partnerships with organizations or developing a peer-to-peer program to support provider improvement and quality
 - Categorizing quality standards by type of programming (social, academic, therapeutic, recreational), although it was acknowledged that many programs are multi-purpose and therefore may not neatly fit into any categorization scheme
3. Explore the feasibility of developing a Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) system for OST care in Virginia, and practices to support engagement in a QRIS system, such as:
 - Studying other statewide school-age QRIS systems to determine the landscape and funding of OST standards
 - Determining the feasibility of a Virginia Quality Birth to 5 (VQB5)/Ready Region model for OST programs to provide regional support for providers to meet quality standards
 - Engaging in stakeholder sessions to ensure quality standards are aligned with stakeholder needs
 - Offering financial incentives for programs that opt-in to QRIS participation
 - Offering supports, including ongoing trainings and coaching, to assist programs in meeting quality standards
 - Ensuring the quality standards and QRIS framework are aligned with existing standards (e.g., VPOST standards, K-12 SOLs)
 - Considering the use of a quality rating scale aligned with health and safety standards, with tiers to ensure flexibility and financial incentives for program quality
4. Develop statewide data collection to determine existing quality programs and isolate factors influencing quality, such as:

- Collecting data statewide systematically on OST program quality and linking to student testing identifiers to measure the impact and outcomes of OST programs, beginning with a pilot program
- Utilizing a data system like the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS)

Other Reflections on Quality Recommendations

Overall, members expressed interest in consistent definitions and measures of quality, accessible to families regardless of income or locality. But, as with health and safety, the complex and varied nature of the OST landscape was a key point of discussion, and generated skepticism regarding whether one set of consistent quality standards could accommodate all programs. The developmental span and age-range of children served, the varied content covered (e.g., athletics to social skills to academics), and differences in family needs across school divisions and localities were all points raised as challenges to defining quality. Non-governmental organizations – namely, VPOST – have done much work in this area. Still, the conversation among workgroup members suggested that many were unsure whether this body of work addressed their concerns regarding complexity. This sense of uncertainty among members underscores the need for more information gathering and sharing regarding the use of various quality standards and guidance across the state.

Access

Workgroup members offer the following recommendations regarding access to OST programming:

1. Identify strategies to ensure that all existing sources of funding are fully maximized, such as:
 - Conducting a fiscal mapping exercise of existing federal, state, and local funding sources, followed by an assessment of whether funding is reaching the highest need areas and children
 - Exploring ways to better integrate financing (e.g., using intermediaries or creating regional capacity) so providers do not need to do this integrative work themselves
 - Creating implementation guides that support and guide providers' own blending and braiding of funding
 - Recruiting the use of funds from other departments with goals that can be met through OST programming (e.g., Department of Criminal Justice Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, US Department of Agriculture food programs)
 - Exploring rate-setting practices to maximize the number of children that can be served through public funding, including from local sources
 - Regularly evaluating and revising family copayments to ensure families are meaningfully contributing toward the cost of school-age child care and to make public funding go further

- Leveraging public-private partnerships (e.g., a “Ready Region” model, or by large localities developing hubs) to coordinate enrollment, funding, and programming between public schools and private providers
 - Creating opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement between OST programs to learn practices for maximizing funding from peers
 - Ensuring that funding is prioritized for families with the highest need, through eligibility qualifiers
 - Supporting workforce in areas that provide infrastructure for accessing OST, such as transportation, which is a challenge in rural and other areas of the commonwealth, ensuring children are able to access existing OST programs
 - Increasing parental awareness of OST resources, including existing programs
2. Collect, analyze, and disseminate data to guide a collective understanding of supply, demand, costs, and outcomes associated with the provision of OST services, such as:
 - Systematically measuring supply and demand across the state – mapping OST program availability (by funding source) and unmet demand
 - Studying impacts of OST care on child and workforce outcomes (in Virginia) and drawing connections between program components and specific outcomes, including by contracting with a third-party to connect data with student information systems to measure student outcomes
 - Evaluating variability in current per-child costs for OST services
 - Conducting a study to identify cost drivers of quality OST care, including a review of lessons learned from other states about what key program elements deliver a return on investment
 - Developing a standardized approach to estimating the cost of high-quality OST services that can account for different program goals and requirements, and using this approach to determine funding levels for OST services
 - Exploring mechanisms to more sustainably and efficiently fund OST care over time
 3. Explore funding levers to support OST services, such as:
 - Exploring potential new, sustainable sources of revenue to fund OST care
 - Exploring the possibility of affordable family copayments (in currently free programs) to motivate parental engagement and student attendance, and make public dollars go further

Other Reflections on Access Recommendations

Members agreed that OST programs need more sustainable funding. However, a major challenge identified by members is that OST programming lacks a clear “home” in the landscape of care options in Virginia, and if integrated into the ECCE system in Virginia, it may act as a competitor with the needs of families with children birth-to-five, and there may be fewer funding sources for

birth-to-five. Similarly, some needs of OST programs, including transportation, reside within infrastructure and not squarely within the OST landscape.

Some members also expressed uncertainty about the extent of administrative costs associated with securing certain funding approaches. Supporting the creation of new OST programs, including through guides for programs looking to operate in school buildings, was raised as a promising approach to expanding access to OST programs. Although raised as a recommendation, some members voiced concerns about family copayments being a burden and barrier for families.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations suggest approaches to supporting health and safety, quality, and access within Virginia's complex OST landscape. The productive discussions held throughout the course of the workgroup demonstrate that numerous federal, state, and local organizations collectively possess a wealth of ideas and resources to maintain and support improvements in Virginia's OST landscape. At the same time, the varied nature of the assembly of OST-related organizations has resulted in limited collective understanding of Virginia's OST landscape. As such, the multitude of organizations supporting school-age children in Virginia is both an asset and a challenge to the broader objective of strengthening the health, safety, quality and access for OST.

APPENDIX A – ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION

The table below provides the list of groups named in Chapter 328 (2025 Acts of Assembly) and Appropriation Act Item 125.10.I (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly) as needing representation, and for each, the list of affiliated organizations represented by workgroup members.

| Groups Named in SB1084 and Budget Item 125.10: | Organizations Represented by Workgroup Members: |
|---|--|
| School Divisions | Portsmouth Public Schools Richmond City Schools |
| 21 st Century Community Learning Centers | Henrico Education Foundation James Madison University Page Alliance for Community Action |
| Private Child Care Providers | Child Care Association Early Care and Education Consortium |
| Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time | Afterschool Alliance Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time (VPOST) |
| Local Parks and Recreation Entities | Office of Children and Families, Richmond City Parks & Recreation, Richmond City Parks & Recreation, Shenandoah County |
| YMCA | Virginia Alliance of YMCAs YMCA of South Hampton Roads |
| Communities in Schools | Communities in Schools of Virginia |
| Boys & Girls Clubs | Boys & Girls Clubs of America Virginia Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs |
| Other organizations that provide OST programming | Child Care Aware of Virginia Early Childhood Advisory Committee Voices for Virginia's Children |