



Office of the Superintendent

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November 5, 2025

The Honorable Sam Rasoul, Committee Chair
DelSRasoul@house.virginia.gov

The Honorable Ghazal Hashmi, Committee Chair
senatorhashmi@senate.virginia.gov

RE: Review of Accessibility Issues as required under HB 2278

Dear Delegate Rasoul and Senator Hashmi,

The following information is to address the deliverables as required under HB 2278, passed into law and signed by the Governor in March 2025. As required by the bill, each school division is to review the challenges the school district has regarding accessibility. This report will provide a summary of findings, including accessibility challenges faced by the school division, the plan to address these challenges, and requests for the state government to assist.

Summary of Findings

In our review of buildings within the district, it was determined that facilities were built to meet the accessibility requirements applicable at the time of construction. Additionally, any subsequent additions or renovations were completed with the accessibility requirements applicable at the time of construction as well.

In addition to this review, HBA Architecture and Interior Design, Inc. was hired to conduct an exhaustive review of our schools (including facility condition inspections), which concluded in 2021. The scope of this review included a review of ADA requirements. While it was certainly acknowledged in the facility scoring system, HBA did not express any concerns that the buildings failed to meet standards/codes that would have been applicable at the time of construction.

Chesapeake Public Schools is committed to providing accessible buildings and athletic facilities. Since the major funding source for these improvements is the capital improvement plan, it will require a significant amount of funds over an extended period of time to provide facilities that fully comply with today's current building codes and ADA requirements. It is important to note, Chesapeake Public Schools, along with other school districts, are challenged to meet ever-changing standards. With every change, the previous revisions and remodels that have already been accomplished are rendered obsolete against today's standards. An example of such standard changes is the dimensional and accessory requirements of accessible restrooms. Changes in these standards take place in about every update.

Below are three examples of accessibility challenges that would likely be addressed as a part of a larger-scale capital improvement project at each school:

- The slope of an auditorium that was built in 1970 would not be at the same grade as what is required in today's standards. While meeting current gradient standards would be difficult to achieve without significant interruption to the school environment as well as significant costs, Chesapeake Public Schools has addressed the widths of aisles and the availability of accessible seating.
- The availability and slope of accessible ramps to our buildings. Not all ramps meet current standards.
- The width of doorways entering classrooms also presents a challenge. In many instances, the doorways require redesign, and in some instances, there is simply not enough space without encroaching on other requirements.

Strategies to Address Accessibility

Before this review requirement, Chesapeake Public Schools had already begun a review of our educational environments. As a part of our efforts to meet accessibility needs, it was determined that accessibility to some athletic fields required immediate intervention. The district finalized an agreement with Dill's Architects to do a full-scale review and to provide bid specifications for a meaningful update to allow accessibility to athletic fields at the high school level (seven schools). This upgrade will improve pathways, including the provision of ramps, to enable individuals with accessibility challenges to attend and enjoy the athletic facilities. Design is well underway at three high schools, and we expect to seek competitive bids by the first of the year, with construction starting at the end of the spring athletic season. By addressing this issue, we can provide an immediate impact on students as well as other stakeholders. Funding of \$4.2 million has been committed and appropriated to address these concerns. In addition to improving access to our athletic fields, Chesapeake Public Schools is also building new playgrounds in conjunction with our renovation and new construction projects to provide inclusive play for students at these schools. These improvements incorporate the use of poured-in-place surfacing to provide greater accessibility for all children to enjoy recess.

Accessibility deficits are also addressed through various projects identified in the district's capital improvement plan. In the first five years of the proposed capital improvement plan, there are approximately \$355 million worth of capital projects identified for modernizations, renovations, additions, and new schools, which all include components that address accessibility. It is important to note that these projects are unfunded, and in all likelihood, the city does not have the means to finance these projects over the next five years.

In addition to these efforts, Chesapeake Public Schools plans to continue to review our facilities for projects that can be accomplished within our time and fiscal constraints through other pathways. To this point, the school division has found several accessibility items that are scheduled to be handled as a tactic in our Empower 2030 strategic plan. Items such as door hardware can meet both accessibility requirements and also serve as a security enhancement. Other items, such as drinking fountain heights and types, and signage (location and color contrasts), are also items that can be addressed in our operating budgets over a span of a few years.

Accessibility concerns are also addressed on an individual basis. The Operations Division routinely works with principals to meet the various needs of our students and staff, especially in facilities that have not been modernized and brought up to the current code and standards.

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State Assistance

Chesapeake Public Schools confirms that, to the best of our knowledge, applicable building codes were followed at the time of their respective construction dates. It is also the conclusion of the school district that some projects, to further enhance accessibility for students, can be funded and are planned to be funded in the coming years through the capital improvement planning process.

A dedicated and separate funding stream from the Virginia General Assembly would allow Chesapeake Public Schools and other school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia to meet accessibility goals at a faster rate and would make meaningful updates a reality. Furthermore, additional resources from the state government would help to provide better learning environments for our students in Chesapeake. We would welcome a strategic partnership that would assist us in developing and executing a plan of action.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jared A. Cotton, Division Superintendent

cc: J. Paige Stutz, Chief of Operations