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Voices for Virginia's Children

STATEMENT ON GOVERNOR BOB McDONNELL'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
JOHN R. MORGAN, PH.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"Governor McDonnell's budget recommendations, if adopted, represent a huge step backward for Virginia's children and families. These proposals with few exceptions threaten to undo much of Virginia's progress on behalf of children in the last decade or more. It is especially troublesome that these recommended cuts fall disproportionately hard on children and parents and are especially hard on our most vulnerable children, including children in poverty, those with mental health problems and those exposed to child abuse and domestic violence."

"The Governor recommends drastic additional cuts of \$750 Million to K-12 public education, \$38 Million to health care for 28,000 low-to-moderate income children, \$24 Million to services for at-risk youth, and over \$10 Million for early childhood initiatives. These four cuts alone represent almost half of the total budget reduction in the Governor's recommendations and will negatively impact almost every Virginia family – and Virginia's future."

"A bright spot is the Governor's support for maintaining the Virginia Preschool Initiative at current levels. This will ensure that disadvantaged 4 year olds get a quality preschool experience and enter kindergarten ready to succeed – a powerful investment in the educational success of at-risk children and in Virginia's future prosperity."

"Now that the Governor is on record with his budget input, the public can see for the first time the concrete and devastating human impact of the state budget crisis. The fallacy of dealing with this unprecedented fiscal crisis using a one-sided approach – budget cuts with no consideration of revenue enhancements – will now be starkly apparent to citizens."

"Virginia's reputation as the best state in which to raise a child – we may have to say goodbye to that distinction if these proposals are adopted. These proposals fail to make children a high priority, just the opposite of what Virginia has done in recent times and exactly the opposite of what should be done now, when kids and families are bearing the brunt of an historic economic downturn. In responding to these proposals, we hope legislators will make kids a higher priority."

Voices for Virginia's Children is a statewide, privately funded, non-partisan policy and advocacy organization that builds support for public policies to improve the lives of children. A recognized leader in child advocacy, Voices mobilizes support for initiatives by conducting research, recommending policies, building coalitions, and helping people articulate their support for children. For more information, visit www.vakids.org.