



Wednesday, August 29th, 2022

To: Virginia Department of Energy

Re: Virginia Energy Plan

Climate change is the greatest environmental concern of our time. Although transportation is the single greatest economic sector contributing to climate altering carbon emissions in Virginia, the energy sector is close behind. The passage of the Virginia Clean Economy Act, the Clean Energy and Community Flood Preparedness Act, and Virginia's Clean Car Standards set us on a path to transition from fossil fuels to a renewable energy future that is equitable for all communities and businesses of the Commonwealth. This legislation also ensures we meet the commonwealth's legislative commitment to a zero-carbon energy grid by 2050.

Additionally, recently passed federal legislation like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will result in billions of dollars in investments coming to Virginia to support and expand on what Virginia has begun. But implementing both state and federal legislation successfully will require meaningful engagement of our State agencies including the Virginia Department of Energy (VA Energy).

The Virginia Conservation Network and the below-signed partners have four main asks of Virginia Energy for inclusion in its comprehensive Virginia Energy Plan:

1. *Responsibly* continue providing—and increase—information and resources for communities—with a particular emphasis on low income communities—across the Commonwealth, so that they may access and benefit from the increased deployment of renewable energy.
 - a. This must include just and responsible implementation of funding from the IRA and RGGI that includes money for energy efficiency improvements and tax incentives for renewable energy generation deployment.
 - b. Expanded roles and funding for, and results from, already established Boards and Offices such as the Clean Energy Advisory Board, the Virginia Solar Energy Development and Energy Storage Authority and the Virginia Offshore Wind Development Authority are essential. These Boards should have both the expertise and the resources to conduct studies and develop pilot programs to assist VA Energy in its efforts to reduce energy consumption and increase deployment of renewable energy.
2. Aid and protect *ratepayers* by exploring ways to increase the Commonwealth's ability to participate in existing new energy efficiency programs and develop new programs across the Commonwealth.
 - a. Historically, energy efficiency programs have been underutilized and existing programs are by and large being implemented by a number of electricity utility providers across the commonwealth, which can lead to confusion and frustration—leading to some consumers having access but being ignorant of what is available to them, and others having little to no access, but in desperate need of energy efficiency improvements.

3. Aid in rural economic development by continuing to provide information and resources to communities left with the legacy impacts of our fossil fuel driven economies.
4. Improve the reliability of both our transitioning energy system and rapidly electrifying transportation system by exploring efficient ways to deploy electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Spend funds available for new charging infrastructure in an equitable and efficient manner. Reliable access to charging infrastructure further accelerates transportation electrification. The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has allocated significant funding for states to build out their charging infrastructure along major travel corridors. These funds must be spent in an equitable and efficient manner, and resources exist that can help Virginia map out and implement these infrastructure developments.

Sincerely,



Narissa Turner
Climate & Clean Energy Policy Manager
Virginia Conservation Network



Victoria Higgins
Virginia Director
Chesapeake Climate Action Network



Cassady Craighill
Deputy Director
Clean Virginia



Blair St. Ledger-Olson
Legislative Director
Climate Cabinet Action



Elenor Hodges
Executive Director
EcoAction Arlington



Pamela Goddard
Mid-Atlantic Senior Program Director
National Parks Conservation Association



Samantha Ahdoot, MD
Chair
Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action