

[SUPPORT] [HB 1798/SB 1322]

Topic: Incorporating Positive Community Health Outcomes in Locality

Comprehensive Planning

SB 1322 Del. S. Simonds; HB 1798 Sen. J. McClellan

Overview:

HB 1798/SB 1322 would allow Virginia localities to consider a healthy communities strategy and provide guidance for their comprehensive planning process for raising positive community health outcomes by identifying siting of air, water, and other pollution sources within its jurisdiction. Additionally, localities may encourage feedback from those impacted communities and create a plan incorporating strategies and programs that could target and improve the planning process.!

Reasons to support:

- Addressing and decreasing health risks is especially urgent for several reasons. We remain in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed 1,121,725 Americans. Additionally, the Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters | National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) reported that since 1980 there had been 342 weather and climate disasters, with costs of over 1 billion dollars. Last year, deadly weather such as flooding, extreme heat, tornadoes, and cyclones cost \$165 billion, the third highest cost on record, and killed more than 400 people. These extreme weather events are predicted to be more frequent and severe. Moreover, the continuing legacy of pollution has left many low-income communities and communities of color behind to deal with increased negative health outcomes.
- Including a healthy communities strategy is an optional effort for localities to undertake. Including a healthy communities strategy in comprehensive planning is (1) an exciting nudge for localities to think more deeply about community health and (2) a helpful roadmap to empower citizens, especially those that serve on comprehensive planning committees, to push their localities to incorporate health issues more deeply through the planning process.
- This commonsense strategy would identify objectives and policies to bolster locality efforts to decrease community health burdens such as reducing pollution exposure, improving air and water quality, affordable broadband Internet access, job training, access to healthy foods, aging in place, ensuring adequate emergency management, and increasing resilience to increased flooding and excessive heat, the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity.
- A healthy community strategy would also promote civic engagement and encourage the siting of health services to ensure convenient access for all.
- Cities and counties can use already available resources like EJSCREEN (www.epa.gov/ejscreen) provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the cumulative impact map created by Mapping for Environmental Justice worked with the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative

This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.

(<https://mappingforej.berkeley.edu/virginia/>) to help identify neighborhoods that have major pollution sources. The Office of Environmental Justice could also be a reference.



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