

# SUPPORT HB170

Topic: Expanding Tree Conservation During Development Statewide

Bill Patron: Delegate Keys-Gamarra and Delegate Carr

## OVERVIEW:

Currently localities outside Planning District 8 cannot adopt tree conservation and preservation ordinances. This bill ensures that all localities across the Commonwealth have access to tree conservation language in 15.2-961.1.

To prepare our communities for the impacts of climate change, Virginia localities must have the authority to conserve existing canopy where possible and replant where it's not feasible to keep the trees on site. Climate-ready communities that are resilient to flash floods, urban heat islands and increased air pollution need trees in their toolbox as a cost-effective strategy to deploy.

## Reasons to support

- Virginia continues to lose tree canopy at an astounding rate, which limits the state's ability to improve water quality, reduce flooding and mitigate the impact of climate change on the most vulnerable communities.
- Fairfax County adopted tree conservation ordinances authorized by 961.1 over a decade ago and it has NOT slowed development nor limited new affordable housing.
- HB170 would enable localities to adopt ordinances that establish:
  - minimum post-construction canopy coverage percentages, which could be achieved by preserving existing trees or by planting new ones
  - a tree canopy fund which developers pay in to if it's not feasible to achieve the target canopy percentages on site.
  - establish a framework of canopy credits for high-value mature trees or stands of trees to incentivize preservation.
- Virginia has signed on to the Bay Agreement and is far behind in meeting its urban tree canopy goals. By passing statewide legislation, localities are better prepared to achieve this important goal to help improve water quality in our local rivers and streams as well as the Chesapeake Bay.



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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](http://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.