

Support HB256 & SB425

Topic: Incorporating Environmental Justice strategies in Comprehensive Planning

Bill Patron: Sen Bagby and Del. Simonds

OVERVIEW:

HB256 and SB425 would require Virginia localities to consider incorporating an environmental Justice strategy in their comprehensive planning process. Additionally, localities shall consider identifying environmental justice and fenceline communities within the jurisdiction of the local planning commission and identify objectives and policies to reduce health risks, to promote civic engagement, and to prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of environmental justice and fenceline communities.

REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Addressing and decreasing health risks is especially urgent for several reasons. The continuing legacy of pollution has left many low-income communities and communities of color behind to deal with increased adverse health outcomes.
- Including an Environmental Justice strategy is an important effort for localities. Including an Environmental Justice strategy in comprehensive planning is (1) an exciting opportunity for localities to think more deeply about community health and (2) a helpful roadmap to empower citizens, especially those who serve on planning committees, to push their localities to incorporate environmental justice 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.
- An Environmental Justice strategy promotes civic engagement and community involvement in planning.



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