

## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

### 2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Arlington County's legislative priorities include issues related to human services, healthcare, land use and housing, finance, transportation, criminal justice reform, education, general government, public safety, energy, and the environment.

#### A. Human Services

1. Address Critical Workforce Shortages: Support the Virginia Community Service Board (VACSB) in securing \$167.5 million investment in recruitment and retention initiatives for CSBs across Virginia including quarterly recruitment and retention bonuses, funds to create a path to licensure by paying for clinical supervision hours and funds for loan repayments and scholarships. It is critical to fully fund the entire continuum of care and to create a sustainable workforce pipeline to address the behavioral health crisis in Virginia.
2. STEP-VA and Mobile Crisis Services: Continue to allocate funding to implement the next steps of STEP-VA, outpatient services, and mobile crisis services in Arlington County. Extend the implementation deadline for all the STEPs until full funding is allocated.
3. Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention Center (CIC): Support additional funding of \$1,070,313 for immediate operational and personnel expenses for the CIC. As part of Arlington County's Community Service Board (CSB), this location serves as an alternative site for individuals to receive emergency mental health evaluations and to wait for hospital beds when no state psychiatric beds are available. While Arlington County fully supports solving the shortage of psychiatric beds in state hospital facilities, the County views the CIC as an essential part of the solution to ensure a successful continuum of crisis care. The County has allotted local money to support positions for security and staffing and needs additional money to stand up this service in a timely fashion to help the entire Northern Virginia region mitigate gaps in care.
4. Developmental Disability (DD) Waiver Rebase: Increase DD Waiver reimbursement rates by 52% to remain consistent with the results from the Burns and Associates study. Many waiver services are extremely underfunded and are not being utilized because there are no providers who will accept the lower reimbursement rates. In order to fill the slots from the federal Department of Justice settlement and eliminate the waitlist, we first need to make sure there are providers who can provide these services and will accept the higher reimbursement rates.

5. Mandatory Outpatient Treatment (MOT): Support refinement of strategies for timely and targeted mental health services. Such efforts must include provision of sufficient state funding for case management and services delivered in the community along with education and technical assistance to stakeholders in the justice and behavioral health community.
6. Long-Term Care Staffing Standards: Improve Long-Term Care standards by providing living wages, paid sick days, overtime pay, and training for workers, as well as funding to meet state and national staffing standards for Ombudsman staff to patient ratios.
7. Infection Prevention: Require that nursing homes and assisted living facilities employ a full-time infection preventionist and maintain an accessible inventory of appropriate personal protective equipment.
8. Child Care: Increase funding for the state's childcare subsidy program and direct the Virginia Department of Education to enact program changes that increase participation of child care providers. These changes include, but are not limited to, reducing the administrative burden, and increasing reimbursement rates to account for administrative costs and the actual cost of tuition in a locality. Local flexibility to administer or expand support services for childcare is critical.
9. Recruitment/Retention of Childcare Center Employees: Support efforts to create an opportunity for child care centers to participate in pooled benefit programs (e.g. retirement and health insurance) to offer benefits that will help recruit and retain child care workers. Support alignment of state agencies to ensure seamless access for providers to the G3 training program.
10. Reproductive Health Care and Services: Maintain unrestricted access to the full range of reproductive health services for all persons.
11. Funding for Locality Response to COVID-19 pandemic: Ensure that local governments have adequate funding to combat the coronavirus, equip essential workers, local businesses, schools, and the general public to keep them safe and free from the coronavirus.

## **B. Land Use and Housing**

1. Land Use Policies: Support the authority of local governments to plan, zone, and enforce land use regulations, without restricting local zoning authority or the zoning process.

2. Tenant Eviction Prevention and Assistance: Continue funding for the Rental Relief Program (RRP) and the tenant eviction protections passed during the Covid-19 state of emergency.
3. Housing Trust Fund: Support a significant increase and a sustainable source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund. Similarly support increased funding and programming to prevent evictions and to protect our most vulnerable residents.
4. Tenant Rights Administrative Enforcement: Continue to support tenants by establishing a new administrative process, similar to the fair housing enforcement process, for tenant rights that shifts the burden of enforcement from residents to the state.

### **C. Finance**

1. Local Taxing Authority: Preserve all current local taxing authority, including business license, and machinery and tools tax administration, real estate and rate making authority. Any modifications to local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources.
2. Communications Sales and Use Tax: Modernize the communications tax by resetting the rate to the same level as the state sales tax and broaden coverage to include services that have become available since the original law was adopted. Oppose transfers of these revenues to the state general fund for purposes other than those stipulated in the Code of Virginia.
3. Remittance of Wine Tax and ABC Revenue to Counties: Reinstate this policy that was curtailed in the 2008-2010 adopted budget to fund public safety and education initiatives.
4. Equal Taxing Authority: Retain, and grant counties, the same taxing authority as cities to provide a level playing field among localities.

### **D. Transportation**

1. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Funding: Protect existing transit programs, the new funding included in the 2020 General Assembly Session's Omnibus Transportation Bill, and all other dedicated funding for WMATA, VRE and the Transforming Rail Program.
2. Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Funding: Protect existing NVTA revenues and continue efforts to restore funding diverted in 2018 to secure dedicated funding for the State of Good Repair needs of the Washington

Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Of the \$102 million annually that was diverted in 2018, \$63.5 million has been restored; \$38.5 million still needs to be restored.

3. Funding for Regional Transportation to Improve Mobility: Ensure the Commonwealth's \$195 million non-general fund investments for new and expanded transportation projects materialize as part of the Amazon HQ2 development. As Amazon brings more than 25,000 jobs to our region, the Commonwealth will support additional Metro entrances at Crystal City and Potomac Yard stations; improvements to U.S. Route 1 in Arlington County; a connection from Crystal City to Reagan National Airport; and a bus route expansion in Pentagon City, Crystal City and Potomac Yard to improve mobility for our region.

## **E. Criminal Justice Reform**

1. Reform Prosecutor Office Funding Formula: Reimbursement to counties should include the work performed on misdemeanors instead of only felony convictions. Misdemeanor cases account for the majority of cases and this funding will encourage more evidence-based and public safety oriented solutions. The Prosecutor's Office funding formula is currently based on felony convictions and felony sentencing events, which incentivizes the pursuit of felony convictions rather than diversion programs, deferrals, or amendments to misdemeanor convictions.
2. Immigration: Oppose any state mandate to localities requiring local law enforcement officers to evaluate the immigration status of individuals encountered during lawful stops or other routine police activities.
3. Civilian Oversight Boards: Establish the authority for the County Board, rather than the County manager, to hire an independent auditor to stand up the Civilian Oversight Board in Arlington County.
4. Reimbursable Positions Related to Body Worn Cameras: Provide state funding for additional positions related to body worn cameras to increase transparency and accountability with law enforcement. Additional staff in the Commonwealth's Attorney, Policy Department, and Sheriff's Office are all critical to effectively implement Body Worn Camera programs.
5. Include Race, Gender, and Ethnicity on Driver's Licenses: The Virginia Community Policing Act mandates that police departments collect and report data on race, gender and ethnicity of drivers encountered during traffic stops. Including this information on driver's licenses allows for automated collection of this data, reduces the need for officers to ask intrusive personal questions, and decreases the duration of, and motorist interaction with police during, the traffic stop.

6. Human Trafficking: Support measures to combat human trafficking, including enhanced training of law enforcement personnel.
7. Mufflers and Noise Ordinance: Reinstate law enforcement authority to regulate noise from car mufflers without doing so by unfunded mandate. Language should include specific requirements surrounding annual vehicle inspections to thoroughly examine the exhaust systems and include parameters around permissible noise levels around digital exhaust systems.
8. Marijuana: Ensure legislation regarding marijuana remains consistent with Arlington County's local revenue, land use, and public health and safety policies.

## **F. Education**

1. Teacher Raises: Support state teacher pay increases without conditions such as local matches, recognizing that Arlington Public Schools annually raises teacher salaries at levels consistent with local revenue and further, funds from local revenue the full salaries and increases of many positions above the state's Standards of Quality-funded positions.
2. Youth Mental Health: Increase the number of school counselors required and supported by the Standards of Quality beyond the 1:325 ratio to support more resources for students.
3. Support for Distance Learning: Provide additional resources and legislative authority to enable distance learning for students, both during the COVID-19 pandemic, and afterwards to enable access to classwork, homework and school projects.

## **G. General Government**

1. Unfunded Mandates: Oppose any mandates that are not fully funded, including additional administrative burdens on local governments.
2. Broadband Access: Expand access to the Internet to assist with tele-work, tele-medicine, and educational needs as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Continue to promote digital equity across the Commonwealth, including access to substantive data and local flexibility to serve residents, businesses, and the community.
3. Electronic Meetings for Public Bodies: Permanently allow virtual participation for public bodies to meet by electronic means under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

4. Clarify Prevailing Wage Alignment: Support the modification of the recently implemented Prevailing Wage requirements such that the definition of Public Works is clarified to align with the requirements of Davis- Bacon.
5. Job Order Construction Contracts: Support the increase of the maximum threshold amount for Job Order Contracts from \$6 million per contract to \$7 million per contract. Support associating the maximum threshold amount for Job Order Contracts to an inflationary index such that the threshold would increase with inflation.
6. Northern Virginia Court Fees: Restore the final \$980,000 of the \$2.98 million general fund dollars eliminated during the budget shortfall of 2009 that were replaced with the Technology Trust Fund (TTF). The money will support clerk's operations to help with technology needs that have arisen during the pandemic.

#### **H. Public Safety/Emergencies**

1. Jail Per Diems: Increase per diem funding to a level that recognizes the costs of housing inmates in local jails. The Jail Cost Report of 2020 estimates the actual cost per person per day is \$334.52 and the state reimbursement rate is \$4 per person per day for people with local charges and \$12 per person per day for people with sentences of two years or more.
2. Jail Diversion Efforts: Adequately fund jail diversion efforts for mental health and substance-abusing individuals who become involved with the criminal justice system.
3. Next Generation 911: Support the statewide transition to Next Generation 911 using state funds that will be dedicated to the 911 Services Board; this should not be an unfunded mandate for which localities become accountable.

#### **I. Energy and the Environment**

1. Protect the Virginia Clean Economy Act: Maintain the mandatory renewable energy portfolio standard program and work with energy providers to produce their electricity from 100 percent renewable sources by 2050.
2. Protect Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI): Preserve the cap-and-trade program that caps carbon dioxide emissions, and in turn, requires power plants to reduce their pollution loads to meet this cap or obtain allowances through quarterly auctions. The proceeds from these auctions are important to invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

3. Public/Private Partnerships: Engage in public private partnerships to drive innovation in renewable technologies, including but not limited to, green banks, building codes, electric vehicle infrastructure, and local commercial building efficiency benchmarking.
4. Individual Energy Choice: Permit individual retail customers the choice to purchase 100% renewable electricity from any licensed competitive supplier of electric energy regardless of whether the incumbent utility also offers it. Purchases can be made individually, as part of a collaborative or alliance, or through local government agencies administering aggregated commercial and residential renewable energy purchases to meet local/regional climate and equity objectives.
5. Ratepayer Protections: Continue utility moratorium shut off during the Covid-19 pandemic. Support the SCC's ability to limit administrative fees that utilities can charge for participants in the multi-family shared solar program.
6. Preserving and Expanding Tree Canopy: Support legislation to provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, reduce energy use, and mitigate urban heat islands and their health effects.
7. Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF): Increase SLAF funding to support projects that provide Chesapeake Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) nutrient and sediment reductions required under MS4 permits. Evaluate updating proposal scoring criteria to assign points to projects that also support local stormwater resiliency priorities and needs.