



October 22, 2025

Honorable Takis Karantonis, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Environmental Legislative Priorities

Dear Chair Karantonis:

EcoAction Arlington, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions Arlington Hub, and the Sierra Club Potomac River Group recognize the key role state legislation plays in advancing Arlington's ability to meet its climate goals. The major retrenchment on environmental policies at the federal level makes the state role in advancing climate and environmental policies even more important. Anticipating that the political dynamics in Richmond will be more favorable than in recent years, we offer the following recommendations for Arlington's legislative priorities for the 2026 General Assembly session.

Advancing Building Decarbonization. With buildings accounting for about 53 percent of Arlington's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, reducing overall energy use and phasing out onsite burning of fossil fuels are critical to meeting the County's carbon neutrality goal. However, Arlington has only a few tools and limited resources to accelerate this transition. State legislation needed to advance these goals include:

- **Building Benchmarking and Building Performance Standards.** Local authority to require buildings to report their energy usage is a first step to baselining energy use in large buildings and identifying opportunities for energy savings. Additional authority to require buildings to achieve a specific energy use target would effectively advance energy use reductions in line with the Community Energy Plan. Regionally, DC and Montgomery County have adopted building benchmarking and performance standards
- **Building Code Updates.** Legislation requiring the automatic update of Virginia's building codes to reflect the current version of the International Energy Conservation Code would bring Virginia's outdated building code up to national standards.

- **Building Stretch Codes.** Local authority to adopt building codes that exceed VA code would further advance Arlington goals of reducing energy use and electrification to achieve GHG emissions targets.

Equitably Transitioning the Power Grid to Renewable Energy. Under Governor Youngkin, Virginia has backtracked from ambitious legislation passed in 2020 and 2021, pulling out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and allowing Dominion and other utilities to ignore the targets in the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) for renewable energy and energy efficiency. In addition, surging demand for electricity from data centers is driving up the cost of electricity to average ratepayers. These developments are unfairly driving up costs for Arlington ratepayers and undermining the County’s ability to meet its 2035 goal of powering all its electricity through renewable energy sources. Legislation to reverse these trends and advance affordable, resilient and carbon free electricity include:

- Rejoining RGGI to incentivize electricity producers to reduce their GHG emissions and shift to renewable energy sources and to provide funding for communities to address rising sea levels and increased flooding and fund energy efficiency upgrades for low-income housing.
- Ensuring that Dominion and other utilities meet the energy efficiency and renewable energy targets mandated by the VCEA.
- Supporting distributed energy sources, including community and rooftop solar, microgrids, and battery storage to build energy resilience within our community.
- Advancing sustainable development of data centers that prioritize energy efficiency, air and noise pollution controls, and water conservation and ensure that costs of building additional capacity to meet their electricity demand are not passed on to ratepayers.
- Permitting on-bill financing for energy upgrades for homeowners and multi-family buildings.
- Providing tax rebates for energy efficiency upgrades, rooftop solar, and electric vehicles and chargers to replace federal rebates.

Supporting Arlington’s Transportation Goals. The County’s recently adopted the vision that *“Everyone can rely on a variety of high-quality, sustainable transportation options to get them where they want to go, when they need to be there, with desirable choices beyond using a car.”* Achieving this vision will require consistent funding for projects both in Arlington and across our region to expand transit options and redesign roadways to make them safe for pedestrians, bikers, and users of other multimodal options. Currently, state and federal funding favors expansion of roads and highways over transit-oriented development. To meet Arlington’s transportation and GHG emissions targets, we recommend:

- Supporting legislation and budget decisions that prioritize moving more people with less traffic over continued expansion of roadways, a strategy that has continuously failed for decades to reduce traffic congestion and has only contributed to urban sprawl and greater

reliance on a car.

- Protecting Virginia's Clean Car Standards
- Advancing the shift to zero emissions electric vehicles through rebates for electric vehicle purchases and funding to facilitate growth in the charging infrastructure and funding of charging infrastructure.

Furthering Other Priorities. Other legislation worth supporting include:

- Extended producer responsibility and related laws such as a bottle bill that would support the County's Board's directive to meet Arlington's zero waste goal by focusing on waste reduction.
- The repassage of the composting law that Governor Youngkin vetoed in 2024 that would have given local jurisdictions the authority to require large generators of organic waste (grocery stores, schools, and hospitals) to separate and divert food waste to composting.
- Expansion of local authority to set targets for tree canopy coverage during redevelopment projects.
- Legislative confirmation of local authority to ban gas-powered leaf blowers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our priorities for the upcoming legislative session. We stand ready to work with the County to help advance these priorities.

Sincerely,

/s/_____

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Chair, Sierra Club - Potomac River Group

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