



March 23, 2026

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Comments on FY27 Draft Budget

Dear Chair de Ferranti:

EcoAction Arlington, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions Arlington Hub, and the Sierra Club Potomac River Group commend the County for continuing to advance initiatives to address the deepening climate crisis despite tight budget resources and considerable uncertainty. We believe, however, that there are additional steps the County can take to accelerate countywide action.

### **Maintain Momentum**

We urge the County not to eliminate the fourth position for the Climate Policy Office and to move forward with filling that position promptly. We are impressed with the CPO's initiatives and relationship building both within the County government and across the Community, building a strong foundation for a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to addressing the climate crisis.

Both the CPO and AIRE Team are in serious need of analytical and program support. A single program support position shared between the two offices would provide each with support for priority programs and should be considered. The position could easily save the County far more in energy bills than it would cost if it is used to advance cost-saving through energy savings performance contracts, public-private partnerships, demand response programs, and grants.

In addition, we offer our recommendations for spending the \$1.5 million remaining in the Climate Action Fund:

- We support the proposed Green Building Incentive Policy initiative to advance familiarity and adoption of Passive House Institute of the US (PHIUS) certification, as well as continued funding of the EcoAmbassadors program. Both of these items are included in the proposed budget. However, we recommend funding no more than five studies through the FY27 budget process, with at least two of those studies reserved for affordable housing projects. Additional funding may be provided in later budget years if the initial studies are a success.
- We recommend that the County initiate an existing building program that would provide a "one-stop shop" to help building owners with technical solutions and financial options

for improving energy efficiency, electrification, and installing EV charging and solar panels. In addition, this program would be well positioned to tap into funding from Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to help reduce energy costs and improve comfort in affordable housing in Arlington

- We encourage the County to offer some low-cost incentives to homeowners to encourage them to reduce energy use, electrify, and install solar panels and backup batteries that build on the recently launched heat pump co-op, the longstanding solar co-op, and ongoing outreach and educational efforts underway within AIRE and the CPO as well as community environmental organizations.

### **Transparency, accountability and climate-aware budgeting**

Because the proposed budget does not incorporate questions into the budget process to support sustainability and climate change decision-making as called for in last year's Climate Action Resolution, we recommend that the County Board direct the County Manager to provide a report by the end of the summer that describes how the County plans to meet the commitment to climate-aware budgeting made in the Climate Action Resolution. Such a report would lay the foundation for instituting climate-aware budgeting in the future and also provide a baseline to inform the development of the Climate Action Plan.

Climate solutions offer major near-term benefits – saving money, improving air quality, and strengthening public health – while the cost of inaction grows with every passing day. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations in greater detail at any time.

Sincerely,

Elenor Hodges  
Executive Director, EcoAction Arlington

Julie Rosenberg  
Leader, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, Arlington Hub

Dean Amel  
Chair, Sierra Club - Potomac River Group

Cc: Mark Schwartz, County Manager  
Jennifer Fioretti, Assistant Manager for Climate Policy