



August 12, 2026

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

Re: Environmental Legislative Priorities

Dear Chair de Ferranti:

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. This summer's persistent extreme weather events locally, nationally, and globally serve as constant reminders that the climate crisis is upon us. Advancing climate solutions, including the transition to clean renewable energy, plays a critical role in ensuring long-term health and well-being of all Virginians. Furthermore, many state and Arlington residents struggle with the rising cost of living. We know that clean energy sources and more energy efficient homes can save families money, particularly when supported by sound government policies. To meet the County's climate goals, we offer the following recommendations for Arlington's legislative priorities for the 2026 General Assembly session.

Advancing Building Decarbonization. Reducing overall energy use and shifting to energy efficient electric systems for heating, cooling, hot water, cooking, and other uses in our homes and buildings will not only reduce carbon emissions but save money for Arlingtonians. However, Arlington has only a few tools and limited resources to accelerate this transition. State legislation needed to advance these goals include:

- *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building codes to reflect the current version of the International Energy Conservation Code would bring Virginia's outdated building code up to national standards.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 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 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. This year's General Assembly session undid much of the previous administration's backtracking on energy policy, but more needs to be done to accelerate the transition to clean renewable energy and address data centers' surging demand for electricity without driving up the average ratepayer's electricity bill. Building on this year's progress,

legislation to ensure a quick transition to affordable, resilient, and carbon-free electricity and a stable electric grid include:

- Strengthening mandates in the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) requiring that Dominion and other utilities meet ambitious energy efficiency and renewable energy targets. In particular, Dominion should be prevented from planning any new fossil fuel facilities unless it has demonstrated that it has exhausted all options for meeting growing demand—including renewable energy, battery storage, energy efficiency upgrades, and demand management strategies—and that the options are least cost to the ratepayer.
- Expanding support for 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. Data center development must align with the targets of the VCEA.
- Permitting on-bill financing of energy upgrades for homeowners and multi-family buildings with repayments included in the monthly bill while still paying less for energy use.
- 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 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.
- Advance the shift to zero emission electric vehicles and growth of related charging infrastructure through targeted financial assistance, rebates, or tax incentives.

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.
- 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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