



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

Every year, Arlington County creates a legislative package that outlines the County's legislative principles and priorities for the Virginia General Assembly Session. The 2024 General Assembly Session will be a "long" 60-day session, beginning January 10, 2024, and ending on March 9, 2024. The General Assembly will adopt a new budget, covering Fiscal Years 2024-2026.

The legislative principles are broader themes that will guide our approach to the General Assembly session and our engagement strategy for our legislative priorities.

- 1) Workforce Resiliency
Streamline state and federal processes to account for local constraints on staffing and strengthen resource pipelines to incentivize filling high demand positions.
- 2) Fully Fund Commitments to Local Government
Ensure the state government pays its debts and fully funds commitments made for services and staffing to local governments before funding additional new priorities.
- 3) Respect for Local Authority
Oppose any efforts that make changes to Arlington County's form of government without the County Board's explicit policy support.

The legislative priorities, which can be found on the following pages, are specific issues, policies, and revenue measures that the County intends to expend significant political capital on, in addition to asking our General Assembly delegation to support on behalf of the County.



2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

A. Human Services

1. Mental Health Crisis Intervention: Increase state funding for a community-based comprehensive system of care that keeps Arlingtonians in Northern Virginia. This includes staffing support for local crisis receiving centers and mobile crisis response units; authorization to maintain a stock supply of controlled medications at these facilities; reducing the burden on law enforcement during the temporary detention and emergency custody order process; and a solution for the lack of available state hospital beds for people in mental health crisis.
2. Address Critical Workforce Shortages: Support the Virginia Community Service Board (VACSB) to secure money in the budget to provide paid internships, clinical supervision hours, student loan repayment programs, and scholarship programs. 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.
3. Behavioral Health System Services: Increase funding for all services funded as part of the System Transformation Excellence and Performance (STEP-VA) program to account for the cost of inflation. This Commonwealth initiative provides community-based services for individuals with behavioral health disorders featuring a uniform set of required services, consistent quality measures, and improved oversight across Virginia.
4. Developmental Disability (DD) Waiver Services: Continue to fund Priority One waiver slots and conduct a re-baseline of the services reimbursement rates prior to each biennial budget.
5. Reproductive Health Care and Services: Maintain unrestricted access to the full range of reproductive health services for all persons.
6. LGBTQ+ Rights: Protect existing legislation that codifies rights and protections for LGBTQ+ Virginians. Support any proposed expansions to those rights and reinforce school boards in their efforts to allow LGBTQ+ students freedom of expression.
7. Infection Prevention: Fund and maintain an accessible inventory of personal protective equipment for respiratory illnesses with an up-to-date training program for usage in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.



8. Staffing Standards and Licensure Requirements: 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. Streamline healthcare workers ability to obtain licensure in Virginia when they are already licensed in other states.
9. 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.
10. Medicaid Expansion and Eligibility: Support continued state funding for the local costs associated with Medicaid expansion, such as local eligibility workers, as well as state assistance with reviewing the Medicaid eligibility of more than 1.2 million cases as required after the termination of the federal public health emergency.
11. Food Security: Increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits from \$23/month to \$50/month for older adults to meet their nutritional needs.

B. Land Use and Housing

1. Land Use Policies: Protect the authority of local governments to plan, zone, and enforce land use regulations, without restricting local zoning authority or the zoning process.
2. Housing Trust Fund: Support a significant increase and a sustainable source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund.
3. Tenant Rights and Eviction Prevention: Expand authority to enforce tenants' rights and provide protection in situations of inadequate health and safety conditions and support increased funding, programming, and a right to counsel to protect our most vulnerable residents in eviction proceedings.
4. Short Term Rentals: Maintain authority at the local level to regulate short term rentals and ensure there are registry rules for enforcement and tax collection purposes.



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. Sales Tax on Groceries: Oppose the exemption of groceries and hygiene products from the local option sales tax unless the General Assembly can establish a viable revenue replacement to local governments. Codify a revenue replacement strategy for education and transportation funding.
3. Financial Reporting Transparency: Align state reporting audit formats with new federal reporting requirements under the Financial Transparency Act.

D. Transportation

1. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Funding: Advocate for long-term, sustainable, dedicated state funding and expanded revenue opportunities to meet the growing needs of public transit in our region. It is essential that stakeholders – local, regional, state, and federal, and the public and private sector – work together to ensure that Metro continues to meet transportation and economic development demands and operates with dedicated operating and capital funding in a more predictable structure.
2. Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Funding: Protect existing NVTA revenues and continue efforts to restore state 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.



4. Towing: Grant authority to localities to provide better consumer protections for people who have their cars towed.
5. Vision Zero: Support localities in achieving Virginia's commitment to zero transportation-related deaths and serious injuries on streets and trails. Secure dedicated funding for projects and additional staffing positions, update design standards and guidelines to be more bike and pedestrian friendly, and grant local authority for automated speed enforcement beyond work and school zones.
6. Autonomous Vehicles: Support a study with local government representation to create an Autonomous Vehicle (AV) Testing Program under which AVs can be tested to safely navigate public roadways. The study should consider what legal framework might be desirable to authorize such a program and other AV issues such as safety oversight, data collection, insurance, and permitting.

E. Economic Development

1. State Funding for Economic Growth Initiatives: Bolster local and regional development efforts by maintaining and expanding state funding for economic development policies and programs.
2. Office Market Repositioning: Support strategies and programs that aim to reposition vacant and obsolete office buildings into different commercial and residential uses with the goal of revitalizing properties and encouraging new economic activity.
3. Tourism: Promote tourism by funding marketing costs to attract both first-time and repeat visitors to Virginia.

F. Criminal Justice Reform

1. 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.
2. 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, Police Department, Fire Department, Sheriff's Office, and Public Defender's Office are all critical to effectively implement Body Worn Camera programs.



3. Funding for Prosecutor Offices: Ensure there is adequate funding for the prosecution of misdemeanors, civil duties, and the creation of diversion services.
4. Sexual and Gender Based Violence: Support measures to combat sexual and gender-based violence and crimes including human trafficking, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
5. Marijuana: Ensure legislation regarding marijuana remains consistent with Arlington County's local revenue, land use, and public health and safety policies.

G. Education and Youth

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. Vaping: Increase penalties for the sale of vaping products to underage youth and prevent the operation of vape shops near schools and childcare centers.
3. Youth Mental Health: Expand funding to provide professional staff and services for student mental health needs.

H. General Government

1. Unfunded Mandates: Oppose any mandates that are not fully funded, including additional administrative burdens and public notice requirements on local governments.
2. Broadband Access: Promote local flexibility and private sector investments in expanding Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure within residential and commercial buildings to increase affordable and high-quality service and foster provider competition. Prioritize advancing digital equity efforts across the Commonwealth: computer device access, resources for cost-burdened households, and digital skill-building, including professional training for cybersecurity and other information technology workforce development activities.



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. Procurement: Protect local authority on matters related to procurement such as the open bidding process and the state portal for advertising projects.
5. Information Technology Security: In alignment with industry best practices, establish a standardized baseline for information technology security assessments that localities may adopt to enhance the resilience of cloud-based information systems during a potential breach.

I. Public Safety/Emergencies

1. Staffing: Maintain adequate funding for police departments (“599 money”), sheriffs, jail personnel, and other emergency medical services personnel.
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 9-1-1: Support the statewide transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 using state funds that will be dedicated to the 9-1-1 Services Board; this should not be an unfunded mandate for which localities become accountable.
4. Swatting: Support full restitution for costs associated with a law enforcement response that results from a hoax communication to 9-1-1.

J. Energy, Environment, and Climate Change

1. Protect Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI): Preserve a cap-and-invest program that caps carbon dioxide emissions and requires polluting power plants to meet this cap or obtain allowances through quarterly auctions. Maintain commitment to using auction proceeds as important to investing in local low-and-moderate income energy efficiency and stormwater management projects that are not otherwise available through other local or state funding sources.
2. Protect Virginia Clean Economy Act: Support transition to a sustainable and reliable power grid while achieving lower emission levels associated with 100% renewable energy sources in the Commonwealth, including continuing commitments to energy efficiency and grid- and behind-the-meter energy storage.



3. Public/Private Partnerships: Expand the ability and authority of local jurisdictions to encourage private sector efforts to support energy efficiency incentive programs, reduce fossil fuel use, promote safety, and shift to renewable energy. Such measures include, but are not limited to, local and regional green banks, stronger and stretch building energy codes, electric vehicle and solar infrastructure, local commercial building efficiency benchmarking, and zero emission transportation options.
4. Renewable Energy Choice: Permit 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. Enable Ratepayer Protections: Enable greater representation of local government on behalf of community needs and interests in State Corporation Commission (SCC) proceedings to include advocating for prudent and fair rates, cost-benefit tests, reliability and resiliency, and integrated County-utility planning reflecting Community Energy Plan goals.
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, lower energy use, mitigate invasive plant species effects, 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.
8. Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS): Support policies that promote producer responsibility for environmental, public health, and infrastructure impacts of chemical compounds such as PFAS. Ensure that parties affected by past practices retain rights to fully recoup costs incurred by regulatory actions, public health impacts, and/or environmental cleanup. Oppose policies or regulations which transfer cost of PFAS management onto stormwater, wastewater, and/or drinking water based utilities.