

# SUPPORT HB1276

Topic: Good Governance

Bill Patron: Del. Simonds

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## Reasons to support HB1276:

Addressing and decreasing health risks is especially urgent for several reasons. We remain in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed 843,000 Americans as of mid-January. Additionally, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that just last year deadly weather such as flooding events, extreme heat, tornadoes and cyclones cost \$145 billion, the third highest cost on record, and killed more than 600 people. These extreme weather events are predicted to be more frequent and severe. Moreover, the continuing legacy of pollution has left many low-income communities as well as communities of color behind to deal with increased negative health outcomes.

## Overview:

This bill is a helpful nudge for localities to include a healthy communities strategy in their comprehensive planning process. Localities already undertake comprehensive planning every five years and this would be an opportunity to delve into and address additional health risks families are facing.

Including a healthy communities strategy is an optional effort for larger localities to undertake. Including a healthy communities strategy in comprehensive planning is (1) an exciting nudge for localities to think more deeply about community health and (2) a helpful roadmap to empower citizens, especially those that serve on comprehensive planning committees, to push their own localities to incorporate health issues more deeply through the planning process.

This commonsense strategy would identify objectives and policies to bolster locality efforts to decrease community health burdens such as reducing pollution exposure, improving air and water quality, affordable broadband Internet access, job training, access to healthy foods, aging in place, ensuring adequate emergency management, and increasing resilience to increased flooding and excessive heat, the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity.

A healthy communities strategy would also promote civic engagement as well as encourage the siting of health services to ensure convenient access for all.



### Virginia Interfaith Power & Light

Rev. Dr. Faith Harris  
fharris@vaipl.org  
www.vaipl.org



### Virginia Conservation Network

[vcn@vcnva.org](mailto:vcn@vcnva.org)  
(804) 644-0283  
www.VCNVA.org

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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit [www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker](http://www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker). VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.