



TO: Members, Virginia House Counties Cities and Towns - Subcommittee #2
FROM: Virginia League of Conservation Voters
DATE: January 18, 2024
RE: Virginia LCV Legislative Positions – HB 170, HB 459

On January 18, the House Commerce and Energy Committee will consider the following legislation: HB170 and HB459.

We encourage you to **SUPPORT HB170 and HB459**

[HB170 \(Keys-Gamarra\) Trees: conservation during land development process.](#)

This legislation would:

Allow all localities in Virginia to adopt tree conservation and preservation ordinances—currently, only cities in Planning District 8 are allowed to do so.

Reasons to SUPPORT HB170:

- Virginia localities must have the authority to conserve existing canopy where possible and replant where it's not feasible to keep the trees on site in order to prepare our communities for the impacts of climate change
- Climate-ready communities that are resilient to flash floods, urban heat islands and increased air pollution need trees in their toolbox as a cost-effective strategy to deploy.

[HB459 \(Sullivan\) Trees: conservation during land development process in certain localities.](#)

This legislation would:

Strengthen tree conservation by adding incentives to preserve stands of healthy mature trees and expand how certain localities can use their tree fund.

- Increase the canopy credits a developer receives if they preserve high-value mature trees or stands of trees.
- Developers who provide a stand assessment prior to submitting a site plan and who take the necessary precautions to protect those trees during construction would receive additional canopy credit
- Allow a locality to plant on both public AND private property and use funds to help maintain newly planted trees.

Reasons to SUPPORT HB170:

- Virginia continues to lose tree canopy—limiting the Commonwealth's ability to improve water quality, reduce flooding and mitigate the impact of climate change.
- Virginia is far behind in meeting its urban tree canopy goals under the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

If you have any questions about our position, please contact Michael Town, Executive Director of Virginia LCV, at mtown@valcv.org, or Chris Leyen, Policy Director, at cleyen@valcv.org, or 925-354-1433 (mobile).