

# SUPPORT HB1346 and SB537

Enhance localities' flexibility to conserve and restore tree canopy  
Delegate David Bulova and Senator Dave Marsden

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## Reasons to support HB1346 and SB537

Recent preliminary data suggest that 50,000 acres of forest and non-urban tree canopy are converted to other land uses per year in Virginia due to timber harvest, urbanization, agricultural expansion, and other drivers. These land use changes, particularly in urban and suburban localities, hinder Virginia's ability to reduce stormwater runoff and achieve its WIP commitments to restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

These bills are the result of the months' long stakeholder advisory group representing local government, home builders, commercial builders, agriculture, conservation members and Department of Forestry. The group reached consensus on the following points:

SB 537 and HB 1346 extend statewide the authority for localities to develop tree canopy programs; programs that require developers to preserve or plant trees that are, or would be, lost because of development.

Localities that have an existing tree program are not impacted. SB 537 and HB 1346 just offer new possibilities for localities that wish to adopt these ordinances.

The legislation prioritizes on-site tree preservation and replanting but affords some opportunities to meet canopy requirements in nearby under-resourced communities—including formerly redlined neighborhoods—to help offset urban heat islands.

The bills also allow larger tree canopies to be required when development occurs in areas with existing enhanced tree canopies or when a locality agrees to a somewhat reduced local parking lot, setbacks, and similar requirements.

The bills expand the opportunities for localities, as well as non-profit and other organizations, to establish tree canopy banks and tree canopy funds. These will assist in meeting tree canopy goals, including planting and maintaining trees on public and other property, and advancing pollution reduction, stormwater management, flood mitigation, and other environmental goals.

Additionally, the legislation requires the State Forester to adopt standards to be used by localities in determining how to achieve tree canopy percentages.



CHESAPEAKE BAY  
FOUNDATION

*Saving a National Treasure*

### Chesapeake Bay Foundation

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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.