



2024 Affordability Scorecard



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An October 2023 poll from Christopher Newport University found that “the economy and inflation” was the top issue for Virginia voters heading into the November election. Candidates who centered affordability on the campaign trail fared well, and — after historic turnover — the new Virginia General Assembly looks more like Virginia than ever before. This new energy brought a new opportunity to pass laws that would serve hardworking Virginians, rather than corporations and special interests.

Several of the session’s highest-profile bills would have lowered everyday costs for Virginia families, who look at today's economy and see one that's unfair and imbalanced. While we have many hurdles still to overcome, the 2024 General Assembly session marked some critical strides forward toward making our economy more fair and more affordable.

These included initiatives to create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board, establish a Paid Family and Medical Leave program, and ban the predatory practice of adding surprise junk fees to the end of a transaction. Polling shows all of these initiatives are vastly popular with voters across party lines. While none of these bills became law this year, each gained momentum as they advanced farther than ever before, with two of the three garnering bipartisan support.

The General Assembly also adopted a state budget that rejected Governor Youngkin’s proposed tax scheme that would have benefited the ultra-wealthy while raising taxes on hardworking families making up to \$58,000 per year. Freedom Virginia remains dedicated to fighting for a tax code in which corporations and the ultra-rich pay their fair share while hardworking people can keep more of what they earn.

We know Virginians are struggling with real financial challenges — from affording their lifesaving medicine to taking time off to care for a sick loved one or new baby. Our scorecard outlines where lawmakers stood on bills that would have made Virginians’ lives easier. We congratulate our champions and allies — who chose to stand with Virginians over corporations and special interests — and look forward to our continued work together as we strive to build a more affordable Virginia in 2025.

2024 Legislators of the Year



Senator Stella Pekarsky

The Richmond Times-Dispatch called Senator Stella Pekarsky's bill to ban junk fees in Virginia "the most sweeping consumer protection measure to emerge in this year's General Assembly session." Senator

Pekarsky boldly took on special interests and fought for consumers in an effort to end surprise hidden fees on transactions. Every year, the average family of four loses \$3,200 to junk fees on concert tickets, rental cars, food delivery, cell phone bills, rental apartments and other purchases.

SB 388 passed the Senate with bipartisan support, and made it all the way to the House floor in its first year. We applaud Senator Pekarsky for siding with hardworking families over deceptive corporate special interests and look forward to working with her to pass the legislation in 2025.



Delegate Karrie Delaney

Delegate Karrie Delaney is one of the the General Assembly's leading voices on prescription drug affordability. She has waged a multi-year campaign to advance her legislation to create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) to

lower the cost of medicine for Virginians. If adopted, the board would be empowered to set reasonable upper payment limits on certain high-cost prescription drugs.

This year, Delegate Delaney led the way on HB 570, which passed both chambers of the General Assembly with bipartisan support. This marked the first time that a Prescription Drug Affordability Board bill passed both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly. Although Governor Youngkin sided with Big Pharma and vetoed the bill, Delegate Delaney's ability to work across the aisle has built momentum as we head into next year's legislative session. We look forward to our continued partnership with Delegate Delaney as we work to ensure no one has to choose between their groceries and their medicine.

2024 Affordability Champions



Senator Jennifer
B. Boysko



Senator Creigh
Deeds



Senator Mamie
Locke



Senator Todd
Pillion



Senator Schuyler
VanValkenburg



Delegate Ellen
Campbell



Delegate Destiny
LeVere Bolling



Delegate Adele
McClure



Delegate Briana
Sewell



Delegate Kathy
Tran

2024 Economic Security Allies



Sen. Jennifer Carroll Foy



Sen. Adam Ebbin



Sen. Ghazala Hashmi



Sen. Jeremy McPike



Sen. Aaron Rouse



Sen. Saddam Salim



Sen. Suhas Subramanyam



Sen. Angela Williams Graves



Del. Bonita Anthony



Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker



Del. Katrina Callsen



Del. Betsy Carr



Del. Nadarius Clark



Del. Laura Jane Cohen



Del. Joshua Cole



Del. Kelly Convirs-Fowler



Del. Rae Cousins

2024 Economic Security Allies



Del. Debra Gardner



Del. Jackie Glass



Del. Rozia Henson



Del. Phil Hernandez



Del. Mike Jones



Del. Karen Keys-Gamarra



Del. Alfonso Lopez



Del. Michelle Lopes
Maldonado



Del. Marty Martinez



Del Marcia "Cia" Price



Del. Sam Rasoul



Del. Atoosa Reaser



Del. Holly Seibold



Del. Marcus Simon



Del. Shelly Simonds



Del. Josh Thomas



Del. Rodney Willett

REDUCING THE COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS



**“As legislators, we have a responsibility to provide services efficiently and effectively, and to help reduce the cost of living. I am proud of our work to reduce the cost of necessary prescription medicines, and am proud to be recognized for our bipartisan work.”
-Senator Creigh Deeds**

Prescription Drug Affordability Board SB 274 & HB 570

This bipartisan legislation would lower the cost of medicine for Virginians by creating a Prescription Drug Affordability Board, an independent body of health and medical experts that uses proven, data-based strategies that are already working in other states. Virginians pay on average 36% more than most Americans for medications, spending an average of \$1500 a year. Due to these unaffordable costs, Virginians are forced to choose between life-saving medications and other essentials, like food. A Prescription Drug Affordability Board would help lower costs for the 7 million+ Virginians not on Medicare.

SB274: Vetoed by Governor
Senate: 23-16 / House: 50-47
Vote History [here](#)

HB570: Vetoed by Governor
House: 52-46 / Senate: 25-15
Vote History [here](#)



**“It was a privilege to work with Freedom Virginia on legislation to rein in the out-of-control cost of medication with a Prescription Drug Affordability Board. While the Governor failed to sign this bill into law, I am eager to continue tearing down barriers to life-saving drugs with my colleagues in the General Assembly and Freedom Virginia.”
-Delegate Karrie Delaney**

REDUCING THE COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Pharmacy Benefit Manager Transparency SB 660 & HB 1402

These bills, which have been signed into law, will increase reporting requirements to shed light on the rebates and fees collected by Pharmacy Benefit Managers, or “PBMs,” and strengthen enforcement provisions that keep this information hidden.

Transparency on how money flows from manufacturers through PBMs and ultimately to insurance companies, providers, and consumers is critical to understanding the prescription drug market. PBMs are “middlemen” in the pharmaceutical industry between the drug manufacturers and pharmacies, companies that manage prescription drug insurance benefits on contract with health insurers, Medicare Part D drug plans, large employers, and other payers. PBMs directly shape costs and access to medications, but consumers have very little access to the information about their business dealings. These bills do nothing to change existing industry practice – they simply require increased data transparency, which is necessary to ensure fair costs to consumers.

SB660: Signed by Governor
Senate: 40-0 / House: 98-0
Vote History [here](#)

HB1402: Signed by Governor
House: 100-0 / Senate: 40-0
Vote History [here](#)

Office of Pharmaceutical Services SB 122 & HB 1348

This legislation would establish an Office of Pharmaceutical Services to develop and execute a plan to consolidate state agency prescription drug purchasing to increase efficiency and constrain spending on prescription drugs. This bill would direct the Department of General Services to develop a plan to consolidate state agency prescription drug spending and to streamline pharmacy benefit management by the Commonwealth to save taxpayers money and improve efficiency.

The problem of rising drug prices affects all Virginians, not just those who rely on life-saving medications. This bill would help all of our state agencies and departments plan to manage and interact with drug procurement or health plan pharmacy benefits more efficiently and effectively by harnessing the Department of General Services’ strength at saving state agencies money when purchasing products in bulk.

SB122: Passed by indefinitely in Senate Finance & Appropriations
Vote History [here](#)

HB1348: Continued to 2025 in House Appropriations
Vote History [here](#)



“Too many of our Virginia families and seniors have been burdened by impossible costs and forced to make a choice between life-saving medications and basic necessities. I believe that every Virginian deserves to access high-quality, affordable health care.”

**-Senator Schuyler
VanValkenburg**

LOWERING THE COST OF LIVING

Increasing Minimum Wage to \$15/hour

SB 1 & HB 1

These bills would increase the minimum wage from its current \$12/hr to \$13.50/hr effective January 1st, 2025, and increase it again to \$15/hr by January 1, 2026.

No one who works 40 hours per week should struggle to support their families. Research shows that moderate increases in wages benefit both businesses and workers. A moderate increase to the minimum wage has little or no negative effect on employment numbers, and can lead to improved worker productivity, reduced employee turnover, and increased employee morale. Minimum wage workers often rely on government assistance to make ends meet, so raising the minimum wage would reduce the need for these programs.

SB1: Vetoed by Governor
Senate: 21-19 / House: 51-47
Vote History [here](#)

HB1: Vetoed by Governor
House: 51-49 / Senate: 21-18
Vote History [here](#)

Removing the Farm Worker Exemption from Minimum Wage Law - HB 157

This legislation removes the exemption placed on farm workers and temporary foreign workers in Virginia’s minimum wage law. Currently, farm laborers and temporary foreign workers in Virginia are exempt from state minimum wage requirements, meaning that their employers can still pay them at the federal minimum wage rate, which is \$7.25/hr. This bill would put them under Virginia minimum wage, raising their income to the state minimum. When an exemption such as this one is written into state code, it reinforces the structural economic barriers that low-income and immigrant workers face, making it harder for them to create the prosperous life they are working so hard for. Temporary foreign workers and farm laborers do work which benefits our economy and should be protected by the same legislation that protects other Virginia workers.

HB157: Vetoed by Governor
House: 50-49 / Senate: 20-19 / Vote History [here](#)

Banning Surprise Junk Fees

SB 388 & HB 1320

A “junk fee” is any mandatory fee for which the consumer does not receive a good or service, such as administrative fees or processing fees. This bill would require that all mandatory fees are disclosed in the original advertised price to avoid an unpleasant price hike at checkout. The industries that most commonly use junk fees to hide the full cost of a good or service are hospitality, rental cars, and entertainment.

It is estimated that customers faced with hidden fees often pay twenty percent more than they had originally budgeted. Responsible businesses- often small businesses- price fairly and transparently and can seem more expensive than bigger businesses that hide their mandatory fees when advertising prices. Consumers can only take advantage of the free market if they have access to accurate information.

SB388: House rejected conference report
Senate: 28-11
House: 66-30
Vote History [here](#)

HB1320: Continued to 2025 in House Labor & Commerce
Vote History [here](#)



“I’m honored to receive this recognition, but it certainly isn’t about me. This is the result of listening to the needs of my constituents. I’m so lucky to represent the great people of the 36th District and will continue to be a voice for them in Richmond.”
-Delegate Ellen Campbell

INVESTING IN HARDWORKING VIRGINIANS



Paid Family & Medical Leave SB 373 & HB 737

A Paid Family Medical Leave program in Virginia would create an insurance program, much like unemployment insurance, that both employers and employees would pay into, providing up to 12 weeks of paid leave at 80% of a worker's regular paycheck for qualifying medical events. Virginia is the only state in the DMV (D.C./Maryland/Virginia area) that has not passed a state paid leave program.

3.5 million Virginians currently do not have access to paid family & medical leave, meaning they have no guarantee of income while caring for themselves, a new child, or a loved one during a serious illness or injury. A typical Virginia worker taking 4 weeks of unpaid leave loses \$3,700 in income. With access to paid family medical leave, Virginians would no longer be forced to choose between a paycheck and taking care of themselves and their families when life-changing medical events arise.

SB373: Vetoed by Governor
Senate: 21-19
House: 50-46
Vote History [here](#)

HB737: Left in House Appropriations
Vote History [here](#)



“I am proud that Paid Family and Medical Leave passed in the General Assembly this year, and it was great working with the experienced advocates at Freedom Virginia. If only the Governor hadn't vetoed our bill, the people of Virginia would be able to care for their loved ones without worrying about losing a job or paying bills.”
-Senator Jennifer B. Boysko



INVESTING IN HARDWORKING VIRGINIANS



“I am proud to be named one of Freedom Virginia's Affordability Champions. The issues faced by working families and constituents in my district have always been and always will be the center of my work as a legislator. I have fought for Paid Family and Medical Leave for almost a decade, and this year, we passed the legislation for the first time through the entire General Assembly. When I'm in the legislative arena, Virginia's hardworking families will always have a champion.”

-Delegate Briana Sewell

Paid Sick Leave

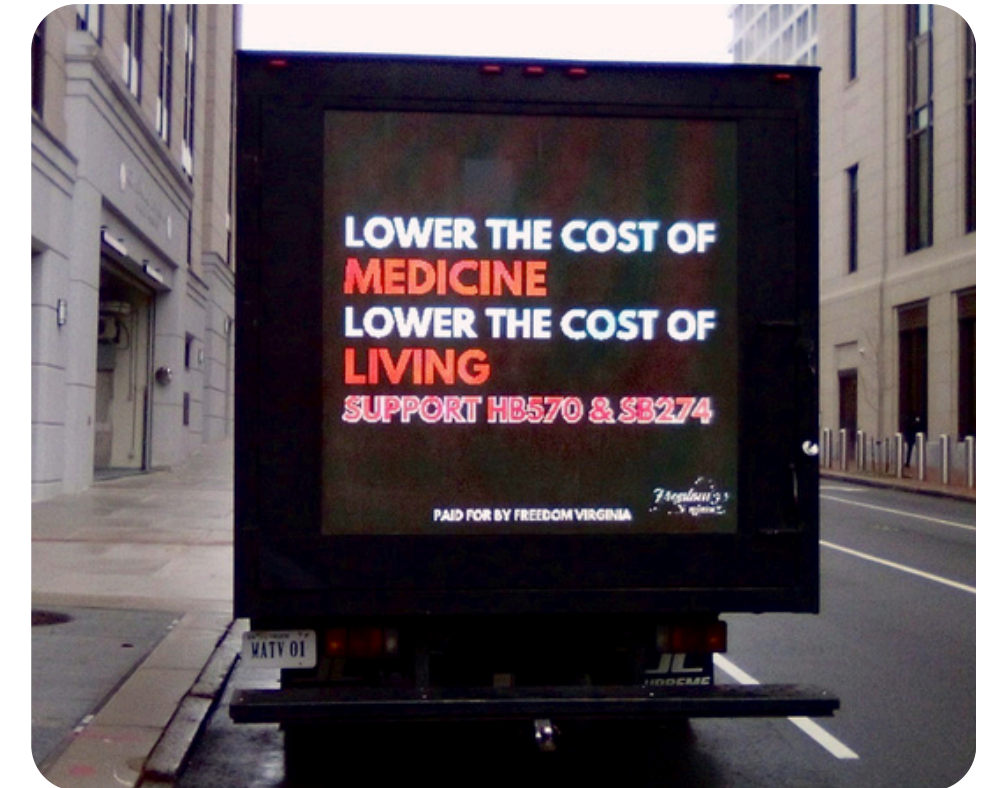
HB 348

No one should have to choose between their health and a paycheck. This legislation would ensure that all Virginia workers are able to take up to five paid days off work each year if they get sick, accruing PTO based on the number of hours they work.

In addition to granting leave for illness or injury, this bill would provide time off to care for sick loved ones or to re-locate due to domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

An expanded system of paid sick leave allows for employers and employees to be prepared when unexpected illness or injury occurs. Encouraging employees to take time off without the risk of lost income also keeps other employees healthy, as sick employees staying home do not spread illnesses to their coworkers. A healthy workforce boosts overall economic prosperity and growth.

HB348: Continued to 2025 in House Appropriations
Vote History [here](#)



INVESTING IN HARDWORKING VIRGINIANS

Public Utility Shut-off Protections

HB 906 & SB 480

The legislation, which has been signed into law, will prevent electric, gas, water, and wastewater utilities from disconnecting residential customers from service on Fridays, weekends, state holidays, and the day immediately preceding a state holiday. It also requires each utility to notify its residential customers of the disconnection policy and to deliver notice of nonpayment to such customers prior to disconnection.

In a state of emergency or extreme temperatures, access to utilities such as water and electricity can be the difference between life and death; heat, water, and the ability to communicate with the outside world and receive news can be lifesaving resources. Extreme temperatures are especially dangerous to infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Nonpayment of utility bills should not lead to a life or death situation.

SB480: Signed by Governor
Senate: 40-0
House: 77-21
Vote History [here](#)

HB906: Signed by Governor
House: 76-24
Senate: 38-2
Vote History [here](#)

CREATING A FAIR TAX SYSTEM

Earned Income Tax Credit - HB 621 & SB 183

In Virginia, 10.2% of the population lives below the poverty line. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) allows working Virginians living below the poverty line to claim a refundable income tax credit, and this bill would increase the refundable amount from 15 to 20 percent of the federal earned income tax credit. This bill would allow low-wage workers to reclaim more of their hard-earned income for housing, groceries, medical care, and other necessities. Letting people keep more of what they earn lessens the burden on state assistance programs and boosts the economy as workers can spend their income more freely.

HB621: Continued to 2025 with amendments in House Finance / Vote History [here](#)

SB183: Continued to 2025 in Senate Finance & Appropriations / Vote History [here](#)



Child Tax Credit - HB 969

This bill would create a \$500 tax credit claimable for each dependent under the age of 18 for individuals or married couples filing jointly whose income does not exceed \$100,000 per year. The estimated yearly cost of raising a child in Virginia is \$23,029 per year, over 25% of the average median household income in the state. The Child Tax Credit would let parents keep more of what they earn to help pay for the care and education of their children. Income stability is important for children’s health, safety, and mental well-being, and healthy and successful children create healthy and successful adults.

HB969: Continued to 2025 in House Finance / Vote History [here](#)

CREATING A FAIR TAX SYSTEM

Fair Share Tax Act HB 865

This legislation would create a new income tax bracket that would tax income earned above \$1 million at a 10% rate. The bill would direct 50% of revenues generated by the new tax bracket to public schools, 30% to the Child Care Subsidy Program to help hardworking families afford child care, and 20% to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to lower the cost of housing for the middle class.

Currently in Virginia, the highest tax bracket (taxed at 5.6%) begins at just \$17,000 per year, when the poverty guidelines for an individual begin at \$36,450 per year. The Fair Share Tax Act would ensure that the ultra-rich are paying their fair share of taxes to fund our schools and make childcare and housing more affordable for hardworking Virginians.

HB865: Continued to 2025 in House Finance
Vote History [here](#)



MAKING CHILDCARE MORE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Early Childhood and Education Fund HB 419 & SB 54

This legislation, which has been signed into law, establishes the Early Childhood and Education Fund. Additionally, it requires the Department of Education to annually report and project funding needed for the upcoming two fiscal years to maintain the current number of slots and increase them to meet parent demand at early childcare and education sites.

HB419: Signed by Governor
House: 85-13
Senate: 40-0
Vote History [here](#)

SB54: Signed by Governor
Senate: 40-0
House: 90-9
Vote History [here](#)



Eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy Program HB 407

This bill, which has been signed into law, ensures that any family receiving public assistance from Medicaid or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children will qualify for assistance through the Child Care Subsidy Program to help them pay for child care. This bill simply amends the current code to include these families.

The Child Care Subsidy Program aims to empower parents or caregivers to work, search for work, or participate in education and training. It also provides the opportunity for high-quality early education for children not yet old enough for public schools.

HB407: Signed by Governor
House: 95-0 / Senate: 39-0
Vote History [here](#)

MAKING CHILDCARE MORE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Employee Child Care Assistance Program HB 1216

This bill would create a pilot program to establish the Employee Child Care Assistance Program, which would provide matching funds to incentivize employers to contribute to the child care costs of their employees. Funds would be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis, but the program would be encouraged to prioritize small businesses.

Child care programs can cost hundreds of dollars per week for just one toddler, and some parents spend their entire paycheck on child care. Many others have dropped out of the workforce because they don't have anyone to watch their kids. For our economy to thrive, Virginia parents need more options for affordable child care.

HB1216: Left in Senate Finance & Appropriations House: 87-8
[Vote History here](#)



Virginia has the 9th highest average childcare costs of any state, with the average cost of out-of-home care for a 4-year-old at \$906 per month and the average cost of infant care at \$1,172 per month. A family making around \$100,000 per year with two children can expect to spend over 26% of their yearly income on childcare, and that percentage only goes up as incomes reach the poverty guidelines.

A Harvard Business Review Study showed that 26% of women who became unemployed during the pandemic became unemployed due to lack of childcare; this was found to be even more likely for Black women and single women. Virginia has a duty to support all of its residents, and ensure that no women are forced to make the unfair choice between steady income and reliable health care for their children.



Mixed Delivery Grant Program and Child Care Subsidy Program HB 1375

This bill would codify both the Mixed Delivery Grant Program and the Child Care Subsidy Program. The Mixed Delivery Grant Program would be administered by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation in partnership with the Department of Education, and the Child Care Subsidy Program would be overseen by the Department of Education. The bill provides more structure and oversight for the two programs and moves the responsibility for their execution to the Department of Education and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

Child care for children under the age of 3 can be the least accessible and most costly, and the Mixed Delivery Grant Program and Child Care Subsidy Program already provide eligible families with public funding for early childhood care and education. Every Virginia child deserves a strong start in life; as Virginia looks to grow and strengthen its economy, it has to tackle the barriers that prevent young working families from succeeding and make a longterm commitment to affordable child care.

HB1375: Continued to 2025 in Senate Finance & Appropriations House: 90-9
[Vote History here](#)

MAKING HEALTH CARE MORE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE



“As someone leading a nonprofit focused on substance use recovery and family strengthening, I deeply understand the hurdles individuals face in accessing treatment and recovery resources, particularly the difficulty of taking time off work for care. Unfortunately, this challenge contributes to over half of Virginians with Substance Use Disorder not receiving the necessary treatment. That’s why I feel privileged to sit on the board of Freedom Virginia, an organization committed to nurturing a Commonwealth where every family can flourish.”
-Victor McKenzie Jr.,
Executive Director of SAARA of Virginia,
Freedom Virginia Board Member

Payment Parameters for the Commonwealth Health Reinsurance Program HB 591

This bill, which has been signed into law, requires the State Corporation Commission, the body that regulates insurance, utilities, and businesses in Virginia, to set payment parameters that achieve the premium reduction target in the Commonwealth Health Reinsurance Program, which subsidizes plans sold on Virginia’s new health exchange. The Commonwealth Health Reinsurance Program aims to reduce health insurance costs by reimbursing insurance carriers for a portion of their high-cost claims. This bill ensures that this program is running as smoothly as possible, and with the most economic benefit to Virginians.

With the average cost of health insurance in Virginia for one adult being between \$400-600 a month, it is vital that the systems in place keep the plans sold on the marketplace affordable. This bill would help accomplish that, as the majority of Virginians shopping on the marketplace are able to purchase a plan for about \$10 per month.

HB591: Signed by Governor
House: 96-0
Senate: 39-0
Vote History [here](#)

Cover all Kids SB 231

This bill would establish state-funded comprehensive health care for children and individuals under 19 years old who are not eligible for Medicaid or the Comprehensive Health Investment Project (CHIP) due to their immigration status.

Currently, 13,000 children in Virginia are without health care due to their immigration status, and approximately 9,000 of those children live below the poverty line. These children would otherwise qualify for state assistance, but cannot receive it due to their immigration status. This bill would get Virginia closer to the goal of having every child healthy and insured.

SB231: Tabled in House Appropriations
Senate: 21-19
Vote History [here](#)

LOWERING THE COST OF LIVING

ADU Permitting SB 304

This bill would require localities to allow permits for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) as a permitted accessory use in residential areas. An ADU is a secondary housing unit, such as a guesthouse or trailer, that shares a lot with a larger home. The bill would cap the charge for an ADU permit at \$250. ADU's can help families house grandparents, adult children or other relatives. They are also an opportunity for families to generate income from renters.

SB304: Continued to 2025 with substitute in House Cities, Counties & Towns Senate: 22-18 Vote History [here](#)

Locality ADU Programs SB 597

Increasing housing supply will help bring down the cost of housing. This bill would authorize any locality in the Commonwealth to provide for an affordable housing dwelling unit program by amending its zoning ordinance. Current law restricts such authorization to counties with an urban county executive form of government or county manager plan of government and certain other localities.

SB597: Vetoed by Governor
Senate: 21-19
House: 52-45
Vote History [here](#)

Development Rights for Affordable Housing HB 878

This bill would permit any local government to purchase development rights or accept the donation of development rights in an effort to preserve and provide affordable housing. The bill grants local governments the powers necessary to carry out the purchase of such development rights and prohibits the conversion or diversion of such affordable housing once the development rights are purchased, ensuring that the affordable housing remains accessible.

Many Virginians are finding housing more inaccessible as large developments of “luxury” housing take up the market and drive the rising cost of housing. This bill would ensure that Virginia localities are able to create and keep affordable housing options for their residents.

HB878: Continued to 2025 in Senate General Laws & Technology
House: 85-15
Vote History [here](#)



Virginia is facing a housing shortage. The state needs over 165,000 housing units, and the city of Richmond alone needs over 23,000, according to a 2023 Richmond City Council resolution. Some minimum wage workers in Virginia pay over 60% of their income on housing due to rent increases and lack of affordable housing.

Who is Freedom Virginia?

Freedom Virginia is a nonpartisan 501(c)4 organization committed to building a Commonwealth where all Virginia families have the freedom to thrive. Through grassroots activism, voter engagement, and legislative advocacy, Freedom Virginia is pushing our elected officials and political candidates to take action to build a better, more economically secure Virginia.

Our mission is to ensure hardworking people have the freedom to thrive in an affordable and fair economy. We are committed to amplifying the voices of the working class and furthering the fight for a more affordable Virginia.

For more information, visit us at freedomva.org or follow us @teamfreedomva on social media!

