

SENATE BILL NO. 1318

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on General Laws

on February 18, 2021)

(Patron Prior to Substitute--Senator Hashmi)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 2.2-234 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 12 of Chapter 2 of Title 2.2 sections numbered 2.2-236 and 2.2-237 and by adding a section numbered 15.2-2223.5, relating to environmental justice; interagency working group.

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That § 2.2-234 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 12 of Chapter 2 of Title 2.2 sections numbered 2.2-236 and 2.2-237 and by adding a section numbered 15.2-2223.5 as follows:**

**§ 2.2-234. Definitions.**

For purposes of this article, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Agency" means the same as that term is defined in § 2.2-4001.

"Community of color" means any geographically distinct area where the population of color, expressed as a percentage of the total population of such area, is higher than the population of color in the Commonwealth expressed as a percentage of the total population of the Commonwealth. However, if a community of color is composed primarily of one of the groups listed in the definition of "population of color," the percentage population of such group in the Commonwealth shall be used instead of the percentage population of color in the Commonwealth.

"Covered agency action" means any (i) agency action as defined in § 2.2-4001, (ii) issuance of a guidance document as defined in § 2.2-4101, or (iii) expenditure of agency funds in excess of \$1 million for a particular environmental, economic development, infrastructure, or transportation project.

"Cumulative impact" means the positive or negative impact on human health or the environment that results from the incremental impact of a covered agency action when added to the effects of other

27 past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes  
28 such other actions. "Cumulative impact" can result from individually minor but collectively significant  
29 actions taking place over a period of time.

30 "Environment" means the natural, cultural, social, economic, and political assets or components  
31 of a community.

32 "Environmental justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of every person,  
33 regardless of race, color, national origin, income, faith, or disability, regarding the development,  
34 implementation, or enforcement of any environmental law, regulation, or policy.

35 "Environmental justice community" means any low-income community or community of color.

36 "Fair treatment" means the equitable consideration of all people whereby no group of people bears  
37 a disproportionate share of any negative environmental consequence resulting from an industrial,  
38 governmental, or commercial operation, program, or policy.

39 "Fenceline community" means an area that contains all or part of a low-income community or  
40 community of color and that presents an increased health risk to its residents due to its proximity to a  
41 major source of pollution.

42 "Low income" means having an annual household income equal to or less than the greater of (i)  
43 an amount equal to 80 percent of the median income of the area in which the household is located, as  
44 reported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and (ii) 200 percent of the Federal  
45 Poverty Level.

46 "Low-income community" means any census block group in which 30 percent or more of the  
47 population is composed of people with low income.

48 "Meaningful involvement" means the requirements that (i) affected and vulnerable community  
49 residents have access and opportunities to participate in the full cycle of the decision-making process  
50 about a proposed activity that will affect their environment or health and (ii) decision makers will seek  
51 out and consider such participation, allowing the views and perspectives of community residents to shape  
52 and influence the decision.

53 "Population of color" means a population of individuals who identify as belonging to one or more  
54 of the following groups: Black, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, other non-  
55 white race, mixed race, Hispanic, Latino, or linguistically isolated.

56 "State agency" means any agency, authority, institution, board, bureau, commission, council, or  
57 instrumentality of state government in the executive branch of government.

58 "Virginia Council on Environmental Justice" or "Council" means the Virginia Council on  
59 Environmental Justice established pursuant to § 2.2-2699.9.

60 "Working Group" means the Interagency Environmental Justice Working Group established in §  
61 2.2-237.

62 **§ 2.2-236. State agency responsibilities.**

63 A. The Secretaries of Agriculture and Forestry, Commerce and Trade, Health and Human  
64 Resources, Natural Resources, and Transportation shall adopt a Secretariat-specific environmental justice  
65 policy that requires the agencies under each Secretary to evaluate the environmental justice consequences  
66 of any covered agency action that involves any portion of the environment of the Commonwealth. Such  
67 policy shall (i) require the agency to meaningfully consider environmental justice and any cumulative  
68 impacts in its administration of the agency's basic law or regulations; (ii) consistently identify  
69 environmental justice communities and fenceline communities; (iii) identify the ways in which such  
70 communities are affected by covered agency actions, including the actions of other agencies; and (iv)  
71 contain public participation plans for residents of environmental justice communities and fenceline  
72 communities that are potentially affected by a covered agency action of the agency. Such public  
73 participation plan shall focus agency resources on outreach activities intended to enhance public  
74 participation by each affected environmental justice community or fenceline community, including by  
75 communicating in the languages of each potentially affected community and by scheduling public  
76 meetings with sufficient written notice and at times and locations that are convenient in each potentially  
77 affected community. Each Secretary specified in this subsection shall review and update his environmental  
78 justice policy at least once every four years and may update it more frequently as needed.

79 B. Each of the Secretaries specified in subsection A shall designate at least one and no more than  
80 three environmental justice coordinators to represent the Secretariat as a member of the Working Group.

81 C. Each Secretary identified in subsection A shall comply with the provisions of this section by  
82 October 1, 2022.

83 **§ 2.2-237. Interagency Environmental Justice Working Group; purpose; membership.**

84 A. The Interagency Environmental Justice Working Group is established as an advisory council  
85 within the meaning of § 2.2-2100 in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Working  
86 Group is to further environmental justice in the Commonwealth.

87 B. The Working Group shall have a total membership of at least 13 members that shall consist of  
88 12 nonlegislative citizen members and one ex officio member. Nonlegislative citizen members shall be  
89 appointed as follows: two of the nonlegislative citizen members of the Virginia Council on Environmental  
90 Justice to be appointed by the Governor upon consideration of the recommendation of the Council and at  
91 least one environmental justice coordinator designated pursuant to subsection C of § 2.2-236 or his  
92 designee from each of the Governor's Secretaries to be appointed by each Secretary. The Director of  
93 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion established by § 2.2-435.12 or his designee shall serve ex officio with  
94 voting privileges. Nonlegislative citizen members of the Working Group shall be residents of the  
95 Commonwealth.

96 C. The ex officio member shall serve a term coincident with his term of office. The secretarial  
97 appointees shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing Secretary. Vacancies shall be filled in the same  
98 manner as the original appointments. All members may be reappointed.

99 D. The Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion shall serve as chairman of the Working Group,  
100 and one of the nonlegislative citizen members shall serve as vice-chairman. A majority of the members  
101 shall constitute a quorum. The Working Group shall meet at least quarterly. The Secretary of Natural  
102 Resources shall provide staff support to the Working Group, and all agencies of the Commonwealth shall  
103 provide assistance to the Working Group, upon request.

104 E. Members shall receive such compensation for the performance of their duties as provided in §  
105 2.2-2813. All members shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the  
106 performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825.

107 F. The Working Group shall:

108 1. Work toward a goal of maximizing state resources, research, and technical assistance to carry  
109 out the purposes of this article and to further environmental justice in the Commonwealth;

110 2. Coordinate with any other governmental body that is working on similar policy issues;

111 3. Solicit and review comments from the public on the implementation of this article irrespective  
112 of whether written comments were submitted to the Working Group in advance of any Working Group  
113 meeting where public comment is taken;

114 4. At each meeting receive a report from environmental justice coordinators who serve on the  
115 Working Group on actions taken by each Secretariat set forth in subsection A of § 2.2-236 to implement  
116 the provisions of this article; and

117 5. Submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly for publication as a report  
118 document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the  
119 processing of legislative documents and reports. Prior to submitting the annual report to the Governor and  
120 the General Assembly, the chairman shall transmit a final draft of the report to the Council and request  
121 that the Council provide written comments. The chairman shall submit to the Governor and the General  
122 Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Working Group, including  
123 a summary of any comments received from the public or the Council and a response to such comments,  
124 no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall  
125 be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated  
126 Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports.

127 G. Notwithstanding the provisions of § 30-19.1:9, this section shall expire on July 1, 2031.

128 **§ 15.2-2223.5. Comprehensive plan shall include environmental justice strategy.**

129 A. For purposes of this section:

130 "Environmental justice community" means the same as that term is defined in § 2.2-234. An  
131 "environmental justice community" shall be identified on the basis of the most current available  
132 demographic information compiled for any census tract, census block, and discrete geographic area  
133 smaller than a census tract or census block within the locality.

134 "Fenceline community" means the same as that term is defined in § 2.2-234.

135 B. Beginning July 1, 2021, each locality shall, during each review of its comprehensive plan,  
136 consider identifying:

137 1. Each environmental justice community and fenceline community within the locality.

138 2. Objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in each environmental  
139 justice community or fenceline community by means that include the reduction of pollution exposure,  
140 including the improvement of air quality, and the promotion of public facilities, food access, broadband  
141 Internet access, safe and sanitary dwellings, and physical activity.

142 3. Objectives and policies to promote public involvement of residents of each environmental  
143 justice community or fenceline community in the public decision-making process.

144 4. Objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of  
145 environmental justice communities and fenceline communities.

146 **2. That the Interagency Environmental Justice Working Group (the Working Group) established**  
147 **pursuant to § 2.2-237 of the Code of Virginia, as created by this act, shall focus its work during its**  
148 **first year on assessing and reviewing environmental justice issues related to current air quality**  
149 **monitoring practices in Virginia, with specific focus on environmental justice communities as**  
150 **defined in § 2.2-234 of the Code of Virginia.**

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