

Department of Planning and Budget 2024 Session Fiscal Impact Statement

1. **Bill Number:** HB333

House of Origin Introduced Substitute Engrossed

Second House In Committee Substitute Enrolled

2. **Patron:** Jones

3. **Committee:** Passed Both Houses

4. **Title:** Virginia Council on Environmental Justice; appointments to fill vacancies; timeliness.

5. **Summary:** Clarifies that the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice may travel throughout the Commonwealth to view and record conditions related to human health and the environment within and in close proximity to environmental justice communities. Under existing law, the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources is required to provide staff support to the Council and the bill includes a new provision that prohibits the Secretary from delegating such responsibilities to any other agency. The bill contains an enactment clause that requires any current vacancies, other than for a vacancy occurring by the expiration of a term on the Council to be filled for the unexpired term no later than August 31, 2024.

6. **Budget Amendment Necessary:** See Item 8.

7. **Fiscal Impact Estimates:** Final, see Item 8

8. **Fiscal Implications:** The bill requires all currently vacant positions on the Council to be filled by August 31, 2024. The bill allows the Council to travel throughout the Commonwealth to view and record conditions related to human health and the environment within and in close proximity to environmental justice communities. To the extent that such a provision leads to additional travel costs for the full Council, additional support may be required. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) indicates that in FY2024, travel costs for four members of the Council totaled \$1,500. If travel costs are similar for each member, travel costs could approach \$10,000 per year.

DEQ currently provides staff support to the Council. Under the provisions of this bill, the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources would be prohibited from directing any other agency from providing staff support to the Council. The Secretary's office indicates that this workload could not be absorbed by existing staff and that the office would likely need a part-time wage employee to fulfill these duties.

9. **Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected:** Virginia Council on Environmental Justice, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Office of the Governor

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No.

11. Other Comments: None.

Date: March 27, 2024

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