Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

Regional Vision ▪ Collaborative Leadership ▪ Professional Service

October 27, 2025

TO: Members, Louisa County Board of Supervisors
Louisa County Administrator

FROM: David C. Blount, Director of Legislative Services

RE: 2026 TJPD Legislative Program Approval

Attached for your review and consideration is the draft 2026 TJPD Legislative Program. It will be on the agenda for approval at your November 3 meeting. The draft program continues three top legislative priorities for 2026 as follows:

1) Public Education Funding
2) Budgets and Funding
3) Land Use and Growth Management

The accompanying "Legislative Positions" section focuses on the most critical recommendations and positions in other areas of current interest and concern in the region.

Items in the draft program that have been substantively amended are noted following this memo.

A summary of the priority positions will be produced and distributed later for you to use in continuing to communicate with your state legislators.

Thank you for your consideration.

Recommended Action: Approve the draft 2026 TJPD Legislative Program

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Substantive Changes to Legislative Priorities and Positions

Public Education Funding (p. 1; first paragraph of rationale): Adds language regarding the federal government's fundamental changes in its funding relationship with states.

Budgets and Funding (p. 2; first paragraph): New language stresses that the state 1) not shift costs to localities of programs previously supported by federal funds; and 2) should collaborate with local governments to implement required changes to programs with shared responsibility.

Children's Services Act (p. 3; fourth bullet): Adds language opposing caps on state reimbursement under the Children's Services Act.

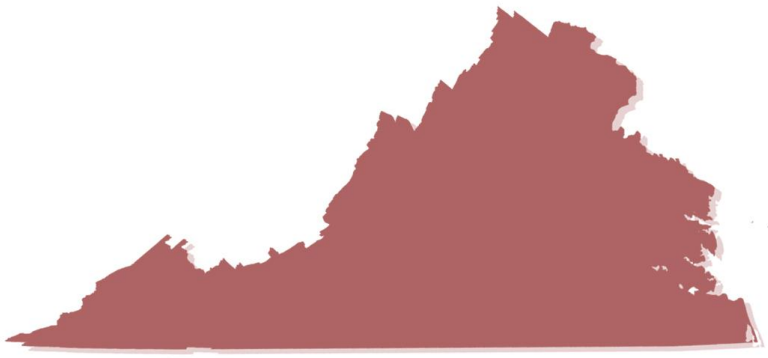
Health and Human Services (p. 6 - 7; various): New language encourages support for the following:

1) investment in staff training and other tools to enable local social services staff to administer revised SNAP and Medicaid programs effectively and efficiently (p. 6, second bullet);

2) rural hospitals facing reductions in overall Medicaid funding (p. 7, first bullet); and

3) additional funding to local communities to assist low-income working families with childcare costs (p. 7, third bullet).

Transportation (p. 8; first paragraph): Adds language supporting additional state investment to meet increasing demands for new construction and maintenance for existing transportation infrastructure.



Thomas Jefferson Planning District

2026 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Thomas Jefferson Planning District

Albemarle County | City of Charlottesville
Fluvanna County | Greene County
Louisa County | Nelson County

October 2025

DRAFT

Keith Smith, Chair
Christine Jacobs, Executive Director
David Blount, Director of Legislative Services

TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Public Education Funding

PRIORITY: The Planning District's member localities urge the State to fully fund its share of the realistic costs of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) and reverse policy changes that previously reduced funding or shifted funding responsibility to localities.

With the federal government fundamentally changing its funding relationship with states, policymakers in Virginia are pledging to exercise caution in development of the next state biennial budget. Also added to the mix is more than $1.5 billion needed to meet increasing state K-12 education rebenchmarking costs and for Medicaid.

The State will spend more than $21 billion dollars on direct aid to public education in the current biennium. Additional state funding for teacher salaries, at-risk students and childcare subsidies in the current biennium are appreciated. However, we continue to believe that the State should increase its commitment to public education in a manner that reflects the true costs of K-12 education. The 2023 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report on K-12 education funding confirmed this, finding that public education in Virginia is underfunded, while noting that local school divisions receive less K–12 funding per student than divisions in other states and several key funding benchmarks.

Local governments consistently go "above and beyond" their responsibilities by appropriating twice as much K-12 funding as required by the state. We believe localities need an adequately defined SOQ that more equitably shares the costs of public education between the state and local governments, in order to ensure the overall success of students across the Commonwealth.

Further, we urge state efforts to support 1) flexibility in the use of state funds provided for school employee compensation; 2) adequate pipeline programs for teachers, especially in critical shortage areas; and 3) funding and policies that assist localities in addressing challenges with hiring school bus drivers and mental health professionals.

Budgets and Funding

PRIORITY: The Planning District's member localities urge the governor and legislature to preserve and enhance state aid to localities, to not impose unfunded mandates on or shift costs to localities, and to enhance local revenue options.

As the State addresses spending priorities for the current biennium, we encourage support for K-12 education, health services, public safety, economic development and other public goals. Localities continue to be the state's "go-to" service provider and we believe state investment in local service delivery must be enhanced. The State should not expect local governments to pay for new funding requirements or to expand existing ones on locally delivered services, without a commensurate increase in state financial assistance.

As the state confronts declines in financial support and additional spending requirements from the federal government, we urge the state to avoid shifting costs for programs previously supported by federal funds to localities, and to collaborate with local governments to implement required changes to programs with shared state/local responsibility. Generally, we oppose unfunded state and federal mandates and the cost shifting that occurs when the State or the federal government fails to fund requirements or reduces or eliminates funding for programs. Doing so strains local ability to craft effective and efficient budgets to deliver required services or those demanded by residents.

We support the legislature making additional revenue options available to localities in order to diversify the local revenue stream. Any tax reform efforts should examine the financing and delivery of state services at the local level and how revenue is generated relevant to our economic competitiveness. The State should not eliminate, phase out or restrict local revenue sources or confiscate or redirect local general fund dollars to the state treasury. This includes any state-mandated exemptions to local revenue sources, Communications Sales and Use Tax Trust Fund dollars, and the local share of recordation taxes, unless a viable revenue replacement to local governments is established.

Land Use and Growth Management

PRIORITY: The Planning District's member localities urge the State to resist preempting or circumventing existing land use authorities, but rather support local authority to plan and regulate land use.

In the past, the General Assembly has enacted both mandated and optional land use provisions. Some have been helpful, while others more recently have prescribed one-size-fits-all rules that hamper different local approaches to land use planning. Accordingly, we support local control of decisions to plan and regulate land use and oppose legislation that weakens these key local responsibilities.

- We support the State providing additional tools to plan and manage growth, as current land use authority often is inadequate to allow local governments to provide for balanced growth in ways that protect and improve quality of life.
- We support local authority to address siting and other impacts associated with utility-scale installation of clean energy resources and facilities. We support state funding and technical assistance that address the planning, production, transmission, and deployment of new energy resources.
- We support broader impact fee authority for facilities other than roads, and changes to the current proffer law that limit the scope of impacts that can be addressed by proffers.
- We oppose legislation that would 1) restrict local oversight of the placement of various telecommunications infrastructure; 2) single out specific land uses for special treatment without regard to the impact of such uses in particular locations; and 3) exempt additional facilities serving as event spaces from building, fire code and other health and safety regulations.
- We believe accessory dwelling units should not be mandated, and that local governments should retain the authority to regulate them.
- We request 1) state funding and incentives for localities, at their option, to acquire, preserve and maintain open space, and 2) enhanced ability for localities to balance growth and development as it pertains to farm and forestland within their jurisdiction.
- We support greater flexibility for localities in the preservation and management of trees.

LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

Broadband

The Planning District's member localities urge and support state and federal efforts and financial incentives that assist localities and their communities in deploying universal, affordable access to broadband technology in unserved areas. While we appreciate federal and state actions that have substantially increased funding for the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI), we believe state and federal support for broadband expansion that utilizes both fiber and wireless technologies, public/private partnerships and regulated markets should include the following:

- Support for cooperative efforts among private broadband, internet and wireless companies, and electric cooperatives to ensure access to service at an affordable cost.
- Support for linking broadband efforts for education and public safety to private sector efforts to serve businesses and residences.
- Maintaining local land use, permitting, fee and other local authorities.
- The ability of localities to establish, operate and maintain sustainable broadband authorities to provide essential broadband to communities.
- Provisions and incentives that would provide a sales tax exemption for materials used to construct broadband infrastructure.

Children's Services Act

The Planning District's member localities urge the State to be partners in containing Children's Services Act (CSA) costs and to better balance CSA responsibilities between the State and local governments. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

- The costs of CSA should be fully funded in the state's base budget, with allocations based on realistic anticipated levels of need. We support local ability to use state funds to pay for mandated services provided directly by the locality, specifically for private day placements, where the same services could be offered in schools.
- We support the state maintaining cost shares on a sum sufficient basis by both the state and local governments; changing the funding mechanism to a per-pupil basis of state funding would shift the sum sufficient portion fully to localities, which we would oppose.
- We support enhanced state funding for local CSA administrative costs.
- We support a cap on local expenditures (with the State making up any gaps) in order to combat higher costs for serving mandated children. We do not support caps on state reimbursement which limit the state's exposure to increasing costs.
- We support the state being proactive in making residential facilities, services, and service providers available, especially in rural areas, and in supporting local efforts to provide facilities and services on a regional level.
- We oppose state efforts to increase local match levels and to make the program more uniform by attempting to control how localities run their programs.

Economic and Workforce Development

The Planning District's member localities recognize economic development and workforce training as essential to the continued viability of the Commonwealth. Policies and additional state funding that closely link the goals of economic and workforce development and the state's efforts to streamline and integrate workforce activities and revenue sources are crucial. Accordingly, we support the following:

• Enhanced coordination with the K-12 education community to equip the workforce with in-demand skill sets, so as to align workforce supply with anticipated employer demands.
• Continuing emphasis on regional cooperation in economic, workforce and tourism development.
• Continuation of the *GO Virginia* initiative to grow and diversify the private sector in each region.
• State job investment and small business grants being targeted to businesses that pay higher wages.
• State support for the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program and for an economic development project adjacent to the existing Rivanna Station.
• Increased state funding for regional planning district commissions.

Education

The Planning District's member localities believe that, in addition to funding the Standards of Quality (as previously noted), the State should be a reliable funding partner with localities by recognizing other resources necessary for a high-quality public education system. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

• Concerning school facilities:

>We support allowing all localities the option of levying a one-cent sales tax to be used for construction or renovation of school facilities.

>The State should discontinue seizing dollars from the Literary Fund to help pay for teacher retirement.

>We appreciate and support the school construction assistance programs enacted in 2022 and request that they be consistently funded.

• We support 1) amending the LCI formula to recognize the land use taxation value, rather than the true value, of real property; and 2) preserving current *Code* provisions stipulating that local school funds unexpended at the end of the year be retained by the local governing body.
• We believe that unfunded liability associated with the teacher retirement plan should be a shared responsibility of state and local government.

Environmental and Water Quality

The Planning District's member localities believe that environmental and water quality should be funded and promoted through a comprehensive approach, and address air and water quality, solid waste management, land conservation, climate change, and land use policies. Such an approach requires regional cooperation due to the inter-jurisdictional nature of environmental resources, and adequate state funding to support local and regional efforts. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

• We oppose legislation mandating expansion of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act's coverage area. Instead, we urge the State to provide legal, financial, and technical support to localities that wish to improve water quality and use other strategies that address point and non-point source pollution. We also support aggressive state investment in meeting required milestones for reducing Chesapeake Bay pollution to acceptable levels. We support state assistance for cyanobacteria monitoring, mitigation, and remediation efforts, as well as hydrilla treatment and buoy maintenance at Lake Anna.

• We support state investment targeted to permitted dischargers to upgrade treatment plants, to aid farmers with best management practices, and to retrofit developed areas.

• We support continued investment in the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) to assist localities with much-needed stormwater projects and in response to any new regulatory requirements.

• We support the option for localities, as a part of their zoning ordinances, to designate and/or reasonably restrict the land application of biosolids to specific areas within the locality.

• We support legislative and regulatory action to ensure effective operation and maintenance of alternative on-site sewage systems and to increase options for localities to secure owner abatement or correction of system deficiencies.

• We support dam safety regulations that do not impose unreasonable costs on dam owners whose structures meet current safety standards.

• The State should be a partner with localities in water supply development and should work with and assist localities in addressing water supply issues, to include providing funding for development and implementation of state-required regional plans and investing in regional projects.

General Government

The Planning District's member localities believe that since so many governmental actions take place at the local level, a strong local government system is essential. Local governments must have the freedom, flexibility, and tools to fulfill their responsibilities. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

• State policies should protect local governments' current ability to regulate businesses, to include collection and auditing of taxes, licensing, and regulation (whether they are traditional, electronic, internet-based, virtual, or otherwise), while encouraging a level playing field for competing services in the marketplace.

• We oppose intrusive legislation involving purchasing procedures; local government authority to establish hours of work, salaries and working conditions for local employees; matters that can be adopted by resolution or ordinance; and procedures for adopting ordinances.

• The state should maintain the principles of sovereign immunity for local governments and their employees, to include regional jail officers.

• Localities should have maximum flexibility in providing compensation increases for state-supported local employees (including school personnel), as local governments provide significant local dollars and additional personnel beyond those funded by the State. We also support the use of a notarized waiver to allow volunteer workers to state they are willing to provide volunteer services and waive any associated compensation.
• We urge state funding to address shortfalls in elections administration dollars, as administration has become more complex and federal and state financial support for elections continues to lag the need. We request adequate funding for costs associated with voting equipment, mail in ballots, registrar offices, early voting requirements, and election security standards.
• We urge state funding necessary for agencies to carry out tasks such as processing applications, reviewing permits and other critical administrative functions.
• We support expanding the allowable use of electronic meetings for all local public bodies, with flexibility for them to determine public comment, participation, and other procedures. Also, any changes to FOIA should preserve 1) a local governing body's ability to meet in closed session; 2) the list of records currently exempt from disclosure; 3) provisions concerning the creation of customized records; and 4) provisions allowing public bodies to charge for providing requested records.
• We support the use of alternatives to newspapers for publishing various legal advertisements and public notices.
• We support federal and state funding for localities to acquire and maintain advanced cybersecurity to protect critical systems and sensitive data.
• We support enhanced state funding for local and regional libraries.
• We support expanding local authority to regulate smoking in public places.
• The State should not inhibit the ability of localities to determine how best to use artificial intelligence (AI) or require any related reporting requirements that are unreasonable.

Health and Human Services

The Planning District's member localities recognize that special attention must be given to helping disabled people, poor people, and young and elderly people achieve their full potential. Funding for at-risk individuals and families to access appropriate services remains critical. Recently enacted changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to Medicaid also will require significant state support and coordination between state agencies and localities. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

• We support full state funding for any local costs associated with Medicaid expansion, including local eligibility workers and case managers, but oppose any shifting of Medicaid matching requirements from the State to localities.
• We support investment in staff training and other tools to enable local social services staff to administer revised SNAP and Medicaid programs effectively and efficiently.
• We support the provision of sufficient state funding to match federal dollars for the administration of mandated services within the Department of Social Services, and to meet the staffing standards for local departments to provide services as stipulated in state law.
• The State should provide sufficient funding to allow Community Services Boards to meet the challenges of providing a community-based system of care for people with behavioral health and developmental disability service needs that helps divert them from needing state hospital care, as well as having services such as outpatient and permanent supportive housing available.

• We support improvements in state hospital capacity to accept individuals under a TDO, and encourage support for rural hospitals facing reductions in overall Medicaid funding.
• We support continued operation and enhancement of early intervention and prevention programs, including the Virginia Preschool Initiative and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (infants and toddlers).
• We support additional funding to local communities to assist low-income working families with childcare costs.

Housing

The Planning District's member localities believe every citizen should have an opportunity to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing. The State, regions and localities should work to promote a balanced mix of affordable and mixed-use housing, and to expand and preserve the supply and improve the quality of housing that is affordable for the elderly, disabled, and low- and moderate-income households. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

• We support the following specific items: 1) local authority to promote and flexibility in the operation of housing affordability programs and establishment of affordable dwelling unit ordinances; 2) increased federal and state funding, as well as appropriate authority and incentives, to assist communities in fostering an increased supply of housing that is affordable; 3) grants and loans to low- or moderate-income persons to aid in purchasing dwellings; 4) funding for rental assistance to low-income families with school-aged children; and 5) policies and direct state investments to prevent homelessness and to assist the chronic homeless.
• We support incentives that encourage rehabilitation and preservation of historic structures.

Public Safety

The Planning District's member localities encourage state financial support, cooperation and assistance for law enforcement, emergency medical care, criminal justice activities, and fire services responsibilities carried out locally. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

• The Compensation Board should fully fund local positions that fall under its purview, to include supporting realistic levels of staffing to enable constitutional offices to meet their responsibilities and limit the need for localities to provide additional locally funded positions. The Compensation Board should not increase the local share of funding for Constitutional offices or divert money away from them, and localities should be afforded flexibility in the state use of state funds for compensation for these offices.
• We encourage state support and incentives for paid and volunteer fire/EMS/first responders and related equipment needs, given the ever-increasing importance they play in local communities. We oppose regulatory action that hinders the provision of emergency services by increasing costs of operations or deterring recruitment and retention of emergency services employees.
• We support state efforts to assist localities in recruiting and retaining law enforcement personnel.
• We support changes to the Line of Duty Act (LODA) to afford officers employed by private police departments the benefits available under LODA.

• We urge state funding of the HB 599 law enforcement program in accordance with *Code of Virginia* provisions.
• We support adequate and necessary funding for mental health and substance abuse services at juvenile and adult detention facilities and jails.
• We encourage needed funding for successful implementation of policies and programs that 1) supplement law enforcement responses to help individuals in crisis to get evaluation services and treatment; 2) provide alternative transportation options for such individuals; and 3) reduce the amount of time police officers must spend handling mental health detention orders.
• In an effort to fairly share future cost increases, we support indexing jail per diem costs as a fixed percentage of the actual, statewide daily expense average, as set forth in the annual Jail Cost Report.
• We support the ability of local governments to 1) adopt policies regarding law enforcement body worn cameras that account for local needs and fiscal realities, and 2) utilize photo speed camera devices to address safety concerns, including on locally designated highway segments.

Transportation

The Planning District's member localities recognize that revenues for expanding and maintaining all modes of infrastructure are critical for meeting Virginia's well-documented transportation challenges; for attracting and retaining businesses, residents, and tourism; and for keeping pace with growing public needs and expectations. We encourage the State to seek to grow revenue over time to meet increasing demands for new construction and maintenance for existing transportation infrastructure; to prioritize funding for local and regional transportation needs; and to provide financial support to localities for increased workloads for performing administrative functions. Accordingly, we take the following positions:

• As the State continues to adjust the "Smart Scale" prioritization and the funds distribution process, there should be state adequate funding and local authority to generate transportation dollars for important local and regional projects across modes.
• We support additional authority to establish mechanisms for funding transit and non-transit projects in our region.
• We support the Virginia Department of Transportation utilizing Metropolitan Planning Organizations and regional rural transportation staff to conduct local transportation studies.
• We oppose attempts to transfer responsibility to counties for construction, maintenance, or operation of current or new secondary roads.
• We support ongoing state and local efforts to coordinate land use and transportation planning and urge state and local officials to be mindful of various local and regional plans when conducting corridor or transportation planning within a locality or region.