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HOUSE BILL NO. 2030

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources on January 29, 2025)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Anthony)

A BILL to establish the Environmental Justice Task Force to further environmental justice in the Commonwealth; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. There is hereby established the Environmental Justice Task Force (the Task Force) for the purpose of ensuring state agencies coordinate efforts to further environmental justice, as defined in § 2.2-234 of the Code of Virginia, in the Commonwealth. The Task Force shall consist of appointees from each of the following agencies: the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Emergency Management, Department of Energy, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Health, Department of Transportation, State Corporation Commission, and Virginia Economic Development Partnership. The Task Force shall require agencies within the Task Force to work with an independent consultant to analyze and report the environmental justice practices and policies of such agencies. The Department of Environmental Quality's Office of Environmental Justice shall oversee the development of such independent environmental justice reports. The Task Force shall:

1. Meet with residents of the Commonwealth, representatives from impacted communities, social justice organizations, consumer protection organizations, and representatives from local governments and make recommendations to the Governor to address concerns raised by such residents and organizations.

2. Make recommendations to the Governor to address concerns raised by the independent environmental justice reports completed by the agencies of the Task Force.

3. Recommend policies to require all state agencies to conduct cumulative environmental and health impact assessments that provide an analysis of historical environmental burdens, such as industrial pollution and long-term health effects, including respiratory illnesses or cancer rates, in environmental justice communities, as defined in § 2.2-234 of the Code of Virginia, for proposed infrastructure projects that may affect such communities. Such policies shall also include an assessment to evaluate the combined effects of pollution, climate risks, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

4. Develop standard quality environmental justice metrics to evaluate (i) social, environmental, and health outcomes for environmental justice communities, (ii) long-term climate resilience, and (iii) equitable distribution of economic benefits from infrastructure projects that shall be used by all state agencies when conducting a cost-benefit analysis for infrastructure projects in the Commonwealth.

5. Establish regional advisory panels consisting of representatives from the community and social justice organizations, which shall include an environmental expert. Such advisory panels shall evaluate the planning, assessment, and execution stages of a state or federal infrastructure project and provide recommendations to the relevant state agency or federal agency to ensure priorities of the community in which such project is located, including priorities that meet the needs of environmental justice communities, are incorporated into such projects.

6. Require each agency comprising the Task Force to report annually on the agency's activities in compliance with § 2.2-235 of the Code of Virginia.

7. Conduct independent environmental justice impact reviews, subject to the availability of funds, for all state infrastructure projects that affect environmental justice communities to assess the short-term and long-term impacts on environmental, health, and social equity and provide recommendations to mitigate any potential harms and ensure compliance with environmental justice goals.

8. Advise the Governor and state agencies on environmental justice issues.

As used in this act, "infrastructure projects" means the structures, facilities, and equipment for roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater treatment and disposal systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; hazardous and solid waste disposal systems, including landfills and incinerators; and structures, facilities, and equipment that generate, transport, and distribute energy, including electric vehicle (EV) charging.

§ 2. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Task Force upon request. The Task Force shall report its findings and conclusions to the Governor, the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice, and the General Assembly no later than November 1, 2027, and annually thereafter. Such report shall be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be made publicly

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60 *available on the General Assembly's website. Prior to submitting the annual report to the Governor and*
61 *General Assembly, the Task Force shall transmit a final draft of the report to the Virginia Council on*
62 *Environmental Justice and request the Council to provide written comments.*