

2026 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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1 **HOUSE BILL NO. 256**

2 Offered January 14, 2026

3 Prefiled January 9, 2026

4 A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 15.2-2223.6, relating to comprehensive
5 plan; environmental justice strategy.

6 Patron—Simonds

7 Committee Referral Pending

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

9 **1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 15.2-2223.6 as follows:**

10 **§ 15.2-2223.6. Comprehensive plan; consideration of adopting an environmental justice strategy.**

11 **A. For purposes of this section:**

12 "Environmental justice community" means the same as that term is defined in § 2.2-234, as determined by
13 the most currently available demographic information compiled for census tracts or census blocks within the
14 local planning commission's jurisdiction, provided that any discrete geographic area smaller than a census
15 tract or census block within the local planning commission's jurisdiction may be designated as an
16 environmental justice community in accordance with the definition set forth in § 2.2-234.

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

18 **B. Each city with a population greater than 20,000 and each county with a population greater than
19 100,000 shall, during the next scheduled and all subsequent reviews of its comprehensive plan, as required in
20 § 15.2-2230, consider adopting an environmental justice strategy that meets the requirements of this section.**

21 **C. The environmental justice strategy shall:**

22 **1. Identify each environmental justice community and fenceline community within the local planning
23 commission's jurisdiction;**

24 **2. Identify major sources of pollution or hazardous waste sites within the locality's jurisdiction, on the
25 basis of data from any federal, state, or local environmental agency or health department;**

26 **3. Identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in environmental
27 justice communities and fenceline communities, by means that include the reduction of pollution exposure,
28 the improvement of air and water quality, emergency management, resilience to increased flooding, excessive
29 heat and other impacts of a changing climate, and the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and
30 sanitary homes, and physical activity;**

31 **4. Identify objectives and policies to promote civic engagement in public decision-making processes by
32 members of environmental justice communities and fenceline communities;**

33 **5. Identify objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of
34 environmental justice communities and fenceline communities, such as low-cost broadband internet
35 programs and internet adoption initiatives encompassing digital literacy and device access, job training,
36 access to healthy foods, access to aging in place assistance, equitable access to public parks and greenways,
37 increased tree canopy, public transit services, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, electric vehicle charging, and
38 other clean transportation options; and**

39 **6. Identify objectives and policies that encourage linking public transit with community and health
40 services and siting or co-locating health services in unconventional settings to ensure convenient access for
41 all community members.**

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