

HOUSE BILL NO. 549

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns

on _____)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Hope)

A BILL to direct the Institute for Coastal Adaption and Resilience to convene a work group to conduct a comprehensive review of certain tree canopy laws and regulations; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. That the Institute for Coastal Adaption and Resilience (the Institute) shall convene a work group to conduct a comprehensive review of §§ 15.2-961, 15.2-961.1, and 15.2-961.3 of the Code of Virginia and all applicable state agency regulations and guidance memorandums related to the conservation and replacement of tree canopy. The work group shall consist of land planners; urban foresters; land use attorneys; engineers; environmental consultants; transportation consultants; representatives from the Virginia Association for Commercial Real Estate, Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties, Home Builders Association of Virginia, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Green Infrastructure Center, Southside ReLeaf, Department of Forestry, Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association, and Virginia Chapter of the Urban Land Institute; and any other relevant stakeholders.

§ 2. In conducting its review, the work group shall (i) evaluate policies to increase tree canopy in the Commonwealth in a manner that balances state and local environmental and economic development objectives; (ii) identify incentives to preserve healthy mature trees; (iii) analyze and identify methods in which parity can be created for tree canopy requirements across local governments; and (iv) develop recommendations to provide regulatory assurance and cost-effective methods for tree canopy conservation and replacement for developers. The Institute shall report the findings and recommendations of the work group to the Chairs of the House Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns and Senate Committee on Local Government by November 1, 2026.