

SUPPORT [HJ 538](#)

Topic: Human Right to Water Resolution (HRTW)

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Reasons to support HJ 538:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated and amplified the critical importance of water as a quality of life issue with Virginians being directed to frequently wash hands to stop the spread. Access to safe drinking water is the difference between life and death.
2. Virginians across the state have been and continue to be locked out of equitable access due to affordability challenges. The lack of access to safe drinking water, such as due to the presence of lead, and water-related illnesses disproportionately impact low income communities of color.
3. Pollutants from industry, antiquated water infrastructure, and rate increases are all threats to safe, clean water for rural communities, low-income populations, and communities of color.
4. The Code of Virginia (§ 62.1-254) states that the control of groundwater resources belongs to the public. Thus all efforts must be made to ensure public access and affordability of water for private use by Virginia residents, instead of being treated as a commodity.
5. Equitable access to safe and clean drinking water is an integral component of basic human rights.

Overview:

This resolution recognizes the importance of equitable access to safe, clean drinking water as an integral component of human rights. It recognizes that state agencies should strategize to limit contamination of water and to mitigate the impact of climate change on freshwater resources. Water-related issues disproportionately burden low-income communities, rural and communities of color. The cost to access water should not compromise one's ability to pay for other essential items, such as food, housing, and healthcare.

With freshwater and groundwater increasingly threatened by storm surges, sea-level rise, overuse, and drought, the state of Virginia should acknowledge its responsibility to protect its water resources and ensure equity for its residents to access and afford water for growing food, cooking, bathing, and drinking.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.