

For the consideration of Legislative Director, Dr. Wendy Ginsberg,

The frequency and severity of extreme weather events has increased in recent years. These increasing events compound the costs to infrastructure and healthcare. More so, the cost of life and property disproportionately impacts vulnerable communities. The number of billion-dollar disasters in the U.S. has risen to 25 in 2024, compared to only 3 in 1980.¹ Virginia itself, since 1980, has suffered a cumulative 116 billion-dollar disasters.²

Commented [1]: I feel like we need more sources backing up some of the facts.

Storms, flooding, and extreme heat are the costly risks for Virginians. Floods not only damage infrastructure like buildings and sewage pipes but also result in health hazards from waterborne diseases and mold growth. Extreme heat increases electricity consumption especially from increased AC use, contributes to poor air quality, and raises the frequency of health issues, such as strokes and asthma. Extreme weather also stresses Virginia's transportation and energy infrastructure, damages its industries such as agriculture, and increases insurance and repair costs for many.

The State of Virginia is aware of these risks; state programs exist to provide resources for homeowners and residents to make their homes more resilient. Preventative measures are key. The National Institute of Building Sciences finds that adopting the most up-to-date building codes and standards, returns about \$11 in avoided costs for every \$1 invested.³ However, the future of many incentive programs funded by the federal government that help Virginians weatherize their homes, reduce their energy bill, and remain safe during natural disasters is uncertain. FEMA support in disasters is also uncertain.

As such, Grassroots Alexandria urges that the legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia adopt the following policy and funding initiatives:

- **Expansion of Funding** of the Solar for All, Weatherization Assistance Program, and Leap Program for Virginia residents so that we can proactively safeguard our electrical grid, improve health outcomes, and reduce energy costs during extreme weather events
- **Incorporation of improved standards** for flood and extreme heat mitigation into Virginia's building codes
- **Provision for Virginia disaster response and funding** to offset uncertain Federal FEMA funding and support during natural disasters or extreme weather events.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters | National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/time-series>.

² Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters; Virginia Summary (NCEI), <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/state-summary/VA>

³ Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2019 Report | National Institute of Building Sciences, <https://nibs.org/projects/natural-hazard-mitigation-saves-2019-report>