2026 Legislative Package

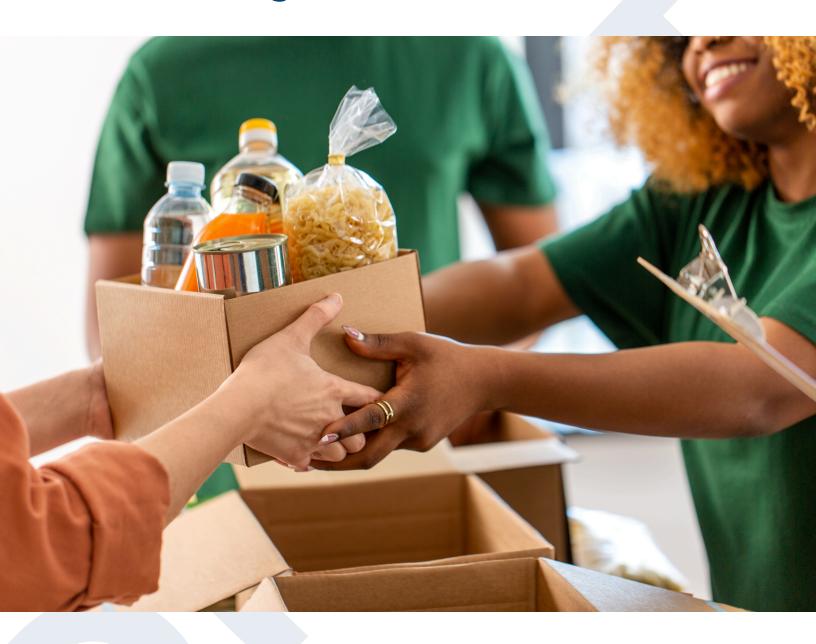## CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

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2026 General Assembly Legislative Package

Home to 157,000 Virginians, Alexandria is a vital economic engine for our Commonwealth. Our community provides essential workers and infrastructure to the federal government, hosts major regional employers like Systems Planning & Analysis, the Institute for Defense Analysis, and Magellan Federal, and contributes billions to the Virginia economy. Alexandria receives about $0.40 for every dollar it sends to the state. That funding supports vital programs across the Commonwealth. Today, however, the City faces pressures that threaten its ability to keep delivering that level of economic strength. **Additional state support is needed to ensure Alexandria can continue to serve as a cornerstone of Virginia's long-term success.**

Alexandria currently strains under unprecedented federal workforce reductions and funding instability. This volatility threatens the housing, social services, and transit systems that sustain the Commonwealth's prosperity. To weather these challenges, Alexandria requires a strong partnership with the Commonwealth. **By investing together in infrastructure, schools, and workers, and passing legislation that empowers local decision-making, we can protect Virginia's economic foundation.** The City of Alexandria's 2026 priorities focus on the essential tools needed to ensure safety, health, and vibrancy for our community and the Commonwealth.

Address Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions

Federal policy shifts have an outsized impact on Alexandria. Nearly 12,000 residents rely on SNAP, and approximately 30,000 depend on Medicaid. An estimated 13,000 federal employees and $3.4 billion in government contracts anchor the local economy. Recent federal actions have reduced benefits and cut jobs, creating instability for families and placing additional strain on local businesses. **Alexandria seeks support to ensure residents can access essential resources as they navigate these long-term challenges.**

Address Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions

The City Supports:

- Investing in programs and training that help prepare workers, businesses, and others affected by federal government actions meet the challenges caused by federal cuts, including offering direct funding, workforce training, and assistance getting benefits.
- Implementing the findings and recommendations of the state's emergency legislative committees and other regional commissions to backfill the loss of federal funding for Medicaid, SNAP, and other critical benefits and services.
- Funding for localities to train staff and modernize IT systems to ensure localities can distribute Medicaid, SNAP, and other benefits and help recipients meet new program requirements.

Advance Housing Affordability and Economic Opportunity

Alexandria faces a deepening housing crisis that threatens our families and our economic resilience. Nearly 60% of Alexandrians rent their homes, and almost half of those households are overburdened by housing costs. The average $2,200 per month rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Alexandria requires an annual income of $88,000. These costs price out teachers, first responders, and the service workers who power our community. This gap persists despite Alexandria leveraging every local tool available through our Housing Trust Fund, rental subsidies, and anti-displacement efforts. **The City seeks new tools and funding to expand housing options so those who make Alexandria work can call Alexandria home.**

Advance Housing Affordability and Economic Opportunity

The City Supports:
- Providing localities a right of first refusal during the sale of publicly-supported multifamily residential properties to preserve existing affordable housing units.
- Increasing the grace period for rent eviction procedures from 5 days to 14 days to strengthen tenant protections and help prevent displacement and homelessness.
- Increasing anti-price gouging protections and funding programs and initiatives like the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to increase housing stability and expand affordable housing options across the City and the Commonwealth.
- Establishing local authority to enforce unit habitability standards per the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to ensure accountability for fair housing practices and property maintenance.
- Enhancing local authority to offer more flexible zoning opportunities to faith-based institutions and other nonprofits to incentivize and expedite affordable housing construction.
- Clarification of statutory provisions governing standing to appeal zoning amendments and decisions to ensure zoning reforms are implemented efficiently and preserve access to the courts for those genuinely aggrieved.

Invest in Critical School Infrastructure

Alexandria is facing a critical school facilities crisis. Our middle schools operate at 120% capacity, and over 60% of our buildings are more than 50 years old, with two dating back nearly a century. Compounding this physical strain is a broken state funding model. As noted by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), the Standards of Quality (SOQ) formula underfunded Virginia school costs by $6.6 billion in FY 2021 alone. This gap leaves Alexandria to fund an undue share of the operating cost of our schools while managing aging infrastructure. **Alexandria and Virginia need an updated formula to prevent widening disparities in educational access.**

Invest in Critical School Infrastructure

The City Supports:

- Increasing funding for school construction to ensure every student across the Commonwealth learns in a safe, modern, and healthy environment.
- Fully implementing the 2023 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) K-12 Education Funding Report to fund the state's share of the true cost of K-12 public education.
- Modernizing the Standards of Quality for schools in the Commonwealth to ensure standards for school construction, maintenance, and operations reflect the realities of each locality and provide equitable access to funding, including modernizing the Virginia Public School Construction Grants Program and the School Construction Assistance Program.

Address Mental Health, Public Health and Safety, and Community Well-Being

Alexandria is managing a complex public health and safety landscape with insufficient state resources. Mental health is now the top health concern for 47% of residents, and we have seen growing instances of anxiety and depression among our youth. We face challenges related to gun violence and domestic abuse, and we seek authority to enforce traffic safety in high-risk corridors. Further, our ability to act is often hamstrung by a "shared employee" funding gap, which forces local taxpayers to cover nearly $40 million in state obligations annually. **We urge the Commonwealth to help close this gap and invest in the community wellness programs Virginians depend on.**

Address Mental Health, Public Health and Safety, and Community Well-Being

Personnel

The City Supports:

- Providing authority and funding to hire additional staff, including behavioral health experts, law enforcement, and others to support individuals in mental health distress, including those under temporary detention orders (TDOs).
- Increasing the state's share of funding for employees in our health department, courts, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Sheriff's Office, and the Commonwealth's Attorney, whose vital services are required by the state, but underfunded by nearly $40 million per year in Alexandria alone because of outdated funding formulas that do not consider cost of living differences.
- Providing localities authority to hire qualified law enforcement candidates who are on the path to citizenship to serve as law enforcement officers, expanding the talent pool and strengthening community policing through critical language skills and cultural competency.

Address Mental Health, Public Health and Safety, and Community Well-Being

Community Well-Being

The City Supports:

- Making Virginia a permanent member of the Governors Public Health Alliance, which supports collaboration and coordination to protect public health through data sharing and communication to promote best practices driven by science and expertise.
- Increasing state funding for programs that support survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.

Public Health

The City Supports:

- Expanding local authority to establish an excise tax on all vaping products, particularly disposable vaping products, to improve public health and help localities meet essential needs in transportation, health care, and other critical areas.
- Amending food handling laws in safe and healthy ways to allow for sale of fresh fruit and other products by entrepreneurial street vendors.

Address Mental Health, Public Health and Safety, and Community Well-Being

Public Safety

The City Supports:

- Expanding local authority for automated traffic speed enforcement tools in locations prone to traffic accidents to further protect community members and foster multi-modal and safe transportation across the City.
- Funding to restore the $36 million federal cut to the Urban Area Security Initiative, which enables Northern Virginia to protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism.
- Increasing gun violence prevention measures, including background checks and safe storage requirements to promote community safety and wellbeing.

Advance Opportunity for All Alexandrians

Virginia's future success depends on the full participation of every resident, yet outdated laws continue to create barriers to civic and economic life. Currently, 1.7 million Virginians face uneven access to reproductive care, and 30,000 same-sex couples remain subject to an obsolete constitutional ban on their marriages. One in eight Virginians is foreign-born. **Our Commonwealth requires modernized approaches to strengthen community trust and stability. Alexandria urges the Commonwealth to adopt policies that protect personal freedoms and ensure equal opportunity for all.**

The City Supports:

- The amendment to the Virginia Constitution protecting reproductive freedom to ensure equitable and unfettered access to healthcare services.
- The amendment to the Virginia Constitution repealing the existing state ban on same-sex marriage and replacing it with an affirmative right for any two adults to get married.
- Restoring and rebuilding community trust by restricting local law enforcement in federal immigration matters.
- Clarifying in law that all skill games are illegal and expanding state support to enforce the law and hold operators in violation of the law accountable, particularly where their practices harm historically disadvantaged communities.
- Increasing state investment in critical underfunded local offices and programs that serve marginalized community members, including the Long-term Care Ombudsman, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and the Area Agency on Aging.

Strengthen Infrastructure, Resilience, and Clean Energy Transition

Northern Virginia's transit network is a critical economic engine for Alexandria and the Commonwealth, generating $28 billion in activity and contributing $1.5 billion to the General Fund. This system delivers a 160% return on state investment, yet it faces a severe fiscal cliff. Virginia's share of WMATA's anticipated budget shortfall is $153 million in FY 2027, and the regional gap for all transit funding will rise to over $400 million by FY 2028. Without additional, sustained funding, transit services will deteriorate, prompting riders to find alternative transportation, creating a financial death spiral for regional transit systems. **To protect these transit systems and our economy, Virginia must pair stable, long-term funding with expanded authorities for localities seeking to support clean energy growth and sustain our infrastructure.**

The City Supports:
- Establishing increased, predictable, and sustainable long-term capital and operating funding for local and regional transit systems that undergird the state's economy, in alignment with DMV Moves and the findings of the SJ28 Subcommittee. This funding includes $400 million in additional and growing annual support for WMATA, DASH, VRE, and other interconnected Northern Virginia networks.
- Investing in safe and efficient multi-modal transportation, and modernization of vehicle and pedestrian safety provisions to reduce traffic congestion and improve public safety.
- Investing in state grants and partnerships that protect, restore, and make accessible historic and cultural sites of state and national significance, including the Freedom House Museum.

Promote Civic Engagement and Election Integrity

Virginia's electoral system faces significant challenges related to fairness, accountability, and representation. The high turnout variability across Virginia's four-year cycle of elections underscores the need for modernized election administration and strengthened voter access. **Alexandria supports improved and expanded voting access and election administration, and advocates for redistricting processes that ensure federal representation for communities like Alexandria is not diluted.**

The City Supports:
- Reducing recidivism and fostering democracy through the amendment to the Virginia Constitution that provides for the automatic restoration of political rights, including voting rights, for people with felony convictions upon their release from incarceration.
- The amendment to the Virginia Constitution authorizing federal redistricting in the Commonwealth outside of the decennial Census to ensure Virginians are accurately and adequately represented in national elections, provided the redistricting does not dilute the City's federal representation.
- Ensuring equitable and accessible access to voting locations for all voters to foster trust in democratic outcomes.
- Funding a study to examine transitioning all elections in the Commonwealth to ranked-choice voting to determine the practicality of moving to a voting structure that could increase voter participation and equitable representation.