



Orange County, Virginia

2020 Legislative Priorities

STATE FUNDING

Locally-Delivered State Services

Orange County supports the Commonwealth's commitment to fund its fair share of locally-delivered state services in the areas of public education, public safety, and health and human services. Further, Orange County opposes mandates from the Commonwealth which are inadequately funded.

Health and Human Services

Orange County supports state policies and funding to ensure the Commonwealth's at-risk families have access to high-quality and appropriate services. The Commonwealth should fully fund localities for state-mandated human services and provide the necessary program flexibility to enable localities to provide comprehensive and case-tailored services.

Unfunded Teacher Pension Liability

Orange County supports the Commonwealth in accounting for its proportional share of the liability by paying its current share of teacher pension contributions directly to the Virginia Retirement System.

Cost of Competing Adjustments

Orange County supports the inclusion of Orange County Public Schools with those school divisions that receive the Cost of Competing Adjustments (COCA). The Commonwealth provides the COCA to public school divisions serving the Counties of Fauquier, Culpeper, Stafford, and Spotsylvania. Orange County Public Schools competes with these divisions when recruiting and employing highly-qualified personnel.

Children's Services Act

Orange County supports the Commonwealth to be partners in containing costs of the Children's Services Act (CSA) and to better balance CSA responsibilities between the State and local governments. Orange County is concerned about recent proposals to move CSA "lump sum" funding to the Department of Education, with any resulting funding shortfalls becoming the responsibilities of the localities. This is a change from the current policy whereby localities request supplemental State funding for such shortfalls.

Further, Orange County supports adoption of the following policies regarding CSA:

- i. the ability to use State funds to pay for mandated services provided directly by the locality, specifically for private day placements, where the same services could be offered in schools;
- ii. maintaining cost shares on a sum sufficient basis by both the State and local governments versus changing the funding mechanism to a per-pupil basis of State funding which would shift the sum sufficient portion fully to localities;
- iii. enhanced State funding for local CSA administrative costs;
- iv. a cap on local expenditures to contain higher costs for serving mandated children; and,
- v. the State being proactive in making residential facilities and providers available to rural localities.

Exemption from Local Real Estate Tax

The definition of *total and permanent disability for purposes of granting Totally Disabled veterans* an exemption from local real taxes should be the Total Disability Individual Unemployability (TDIU) rating given by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs rather than the *Schedule rating (38 CFR Part 4)*.

LAND USE

Orange County supports maintaining its existing and historic statutory authority and discretion in the areas of land use and development. The ability to adequately plan, zone, and enforce land use regulations is necessary to maintain our quality of life and to support an environment which supports business investment.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund

Orange County recognizes the importance of the existing state-local partnership to create a competitive advantage for new and expanding business, which will create jobs for our citizens. The County supports continued availability of the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund as a discretionary incentive available to the Governor to secure business location or expansion projects.

Tourism

Orange County understands the benefits of a balanced economic development program which targets new or expanding businesses as well as promotes and grows local tourism assets. Continued funding of the Virginia Tourism Corporation will provide valuable support to our local tourism program.

Workforce Development

Orange County supports changes in curriculum and funding that will increase the number of students leaving the K-14* system with workforce ready credentials. Orange County further supports innovative models for schools to give academic credit for students that earn industry workforce skills through certifications, or licensure from an approved education or training provider.

**Kindergarten through Community College*

BROADBAND

Availability

The availability of broadband in a community will serve as a positive influence in advancing a community's economic well-being and quality of life. Orange County supports the Commonwealth in continuing its efforts to promote public-private partnerships which can deploy universal, affordable access to broadband in underserved and rural areas. These efforts should focus on economic incentives, budgetary appropriations, and statutory policies in the areas of public safety, public education, economic and workforce development, and telemedicine.

Orange County supports the Virginia Wireless Services Authority and the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Acts. Both of these acts support local government projects, to bring high-quality and affordable broadband to the unserved and underserved areas. Orange County opposes any legislation which diminishes or negatively modifies the long-established enabling authority of these acts.

Virginia Telecommunications Initiative Program

Funding of this successful program should be significantly increased to expand last-mile broadband services to unserved areas of the Commonwealth.

For the purposes of being eligible for the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative Program, localities should be given flexibility when a qualified Internet Service Provider cannot be secured for a project.

FINANCES

Taxing Authority

Orange County supports keeping its existing taxing authority. Like most similarly-situated counties, there is too great a reliance on the real property tax to provide adequate funding for necessary public services and operations - from schools to public safety and libraries to social services. Further restricting or eliminating other local revenue sources, such as machinery and tools taxes, will increase the tax pressure on property owners. Orange County supports legislation granting counties taxing authority equal to that of cities and towns.

Composite Index Calculation

Orange County supports legislation to adjust the calculation of the Local Composite Index for public school funding by directing the Department of Education to adjust its funding calculations for the local ability to pay by using the use-value assessment of real property, instead of the true value, in localities that have adopted use-value taxation and for properties under conservation easements.

TRANSPORTATION

Devolution of Secondary Roads

Orange County opposes any legislation or administrative initiatives which would transfer to counties, the responsibilities to construct, maintain, or operate new or existing roads.

Primary and Secondary Road Funding

Orange County supports increased state funding for primary and secondary road construction and maintenance. Existing state revenue sources for local transportation needs, particularly safety improvements, are no longer adequate to meet the County's current and future transportation needs. Consequently, this situation creates frustration for our residents and serves as disincentive for businesses to locate or expand in our community.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Orange County supports the current practice whereby all year-end funds appropriated to the school division revert to the locality, retaining discretion with the governing body to evaluate and approve the reallocation of year-end fund balances.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Quality Improvement Funding

Orange County supports effective partnerships among and across all levels of government to improve water quality. Orange County supports the goal of improved water quality but opposes provisions of any strategy that penalizes local governments by withdrawing current forms of financial assistance or imposing monitoring, management, or similar requirements on localities

without providing sufficient resources to accomplish those processes. Orange County opposes the imposition of a state fee, tax, or surcharge on water, sewer, solid waste, or any service provided by a local government or authority.

Water Supply and Resources

Orange County requests that the Commonwealth conduct a review of current regulations to have such regulations promote reclamation of water on a local level for industrial and irrigation uses which will offset future demands on all ground and surface water used for human consumption. Orange County also supports appropriations adequate to ensure full funding by the state for the ongoing development and implementation of state-mandated water supply plans, and encourages regional approaches, as appropriate.

Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds

Orange County supports adequate funding to implement the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan, which identifies strategies to prevent and control damage caused by invasive species. Additionally, Orange County supports amendments to the definition of “noxious weeds” to enable a wider number of known invasive plants to be considered for regulation by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Virginia’s Final Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP)

The Chesapeake Bay TMDL Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan issued by DEQ on August 23, 2019, quantifies the reductions in Nitrogen and Phosphorus loadings, from the 2017 estimates, required to meet the 2025 EPA goals. This Plan calls for highly unlikely, disproportionate reductions from agricultural in the Rappahannock and York watersheds. Agriculture in these watersheds must provide between 79% and 87% of all the Nitrogen reductions and between 37% and 68% of all the Phosphorus reductions. The General Assembly should request detailed status updates, no less frequently than annually, from DEQ to assess progress and evaluate the realism of this Plan.

HEALTH SERVICES

Substance Abuse

According to the American Public Health Association (APHA), every 19 minutes, someone in the United States dies from and unintentional prescription drug Overdose. This epidemic is having devastating impacts on families and communities. The Region supports legislative and educational efforts to emphasize prevention and address misuse. The APHA recommends legislation to address physical and mental status examination, doctor shopping, tamper-resistant prescription form requirements, regulation of pain management clinics, prescription drug monitoring, prescription drug overdose emergency response immunity and access to naloxone. Emergency community-based support systems need strengthening to enable local agencies to respond to the needs of impacted families.