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## HOUSE BILL NO. 1297

Offered January 20, 2022

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 62.1-44.38:1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to comprehensive water supply planning process.*

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Patron—Webert

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Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That § 62.1-44.38:1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 62.1-44.38:1. Comprehensive water supply planning process; state, regional, and local water supply plans.**

A. The Board, with advice and guidance from the Commissioner of Health, local governments, public service authorities, and other interested parties, shall establish a comprehensive water supply planning process for the development of local, regional, and state water supply plans consistent with the provisions of this chapter. This process shall be designed to (i) ensure that adequate and safe drinking water is available to all citizens of the Commonwealth; (ii) encourage, promote, and protect all other beneficial uses of the Commonwealth's water resources; (iii) encourage, promote, and develop incentives for alternative water sources, including desalinization; and (iv) encourage the development of cross-jurisdictional water supply projects.

B. The Board shall adopt regulations designating regional planning areas based primarily on river basins *as appropriate based on water supply sources. The Board shall consider existing interjurisdictional arrangements in designating regional planning areas.* The Board may, as appropriate, designate multiple regional planning areas within a single river basin in order to enhance the manageability of planning within such basin. The regulations shall identify the particular regional planning area in which each locality shall participate and shall state which local stakeholder groups, including local governments, industrial and agricultural water users, public water suppliers, developers and economic development organizations, and conservation and environmental organizations, shall or may participate in coordinated water resource planning. *The regulations shall further provide a mechanism for a locality to request a change of its designated regional planning area to an adjoining planning area that is based on water supply source, river basin, or existing or planned cross-jurisdictional relationship.*

C. 1. Each locality in a regional planning area shall participate in cross-jurisdictional, coordinated water resource planning. Such local coordination shall accommodate existing regional groups that have already developed water supply plans, including planning district commissions, and other regional planning entities as appropriate.

2. Each locality in a regional planning area shall develop and submit, with the other localities in that planning area, a single jointly produced regional water supply plan to the Department of Environmental Quality (the Department). Such regional water supply plan shall (i) clearly identify the region's water supply risks and (ii) propose regional strategies to address those water supply risks.

3. Each regional water supply plan also shall comply with applicable criteria and guidelines developed by the Board. Such criteria and guidelines shall take into account existing local and regional water supply planning efforts and requirements imposed under other state or federal laws. The criteria and guidelines established by the Board shall not prohibit a town from entering into a regional water supply plan with an adjacent county in the same regional planning area.

4. This section is intended to inform any regional water resource planning being done in the Commonwealth pursuant to interstate compacts.

D. The Board and the Department shall prioritize the allocation of planning funds and other funds to localities that sufficiently participate in regional planning.

E. In accordance with subdivision B 2 of § 62.1-44.38, the Department shall facilitate regional planning and provide assistance to each regional planning area as needed.

INTRODUCED

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