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From: **Bill-Kathy Richardson** <kwrr2674@gmail.com>

Date: Sat, Apr 11, 2026 at 10:59 AM

Subject: Re: PLEASE AMEND OR VETO SB 388 FAITH BASED LEGISLATION

To: Sandi Chesrown <sandrachesrown07@verizon.net>

Cc: abigail.spanberger@governor.virginia.gov <abigail.spanberger@governor.virginia.gov> ,

Governor Spanberger,

This supplements my e-mail of March 24 on behalf of the Donaldson Run Civic Association in Arlington, as follows:

1. Please note the three specific examples recently cited by Arlington civic associations of the unforeseen deleterious impacts of the 500 foot provision, whose problems Senator Barbara Favola and County Board Member Susan Cunningham have recently flagged for your attention.
2. Advocates for this legislation, with a number of provisions never vetted with relevant stakeholders that members of the General Assembly appear not to have considered, have argued that the well established local zoning authority for which they seek a discriminatory exemption is necessary because of the length of time site review processes may take. In fact, the most recent example of a large affordable housing project in Arlington, Leckey Gardens, demonstrates the opposite. Arlington County accepted the proponent's plan in September 2025, and conducted a site-specific review with community input late last year. The plan was approved in February 2026, some five months later.
3. As the Virginia Association of Counties has advised you in their letter opposing this bill as written, quite apart from the 500 foot provision, depriving localities of their ability to assess specific sites in the context of their communities as to height, density, setbacks, parking requirements, tree canopy commitments, and other impacts is not the way to streamline site review processes. We and other civic associations in Arlington welcome the opportunity to look at more carefully considered ways of accomplishing this goal as applied to nonprofit affordable housing projects. At a minimum, please amend this bill to conform to the House-passed version requiring a reenactment clause, which would provide that opportunity. Unlike other bills specifically identified in your "affordability" agenda for Virginia, this discriminatory deprivation of all local zoning authority needs more work.

Thank you for your consideration of these supplemental comments.

Bill Richardson
President
Donaldson Run Civic Association

Arlington, VA

On Tue, Mar 24, 2026 at 5:18 PM Bill-Kathy Richardson <kwrr2674@gmail.com> wrote:
Governor Spanberger,

The Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA) endorses these views of the Wavery Hills Civic Association, and urges you to return SB388 to the General Assembly with the reenactment clause, as originally passed by the House of Delegates. The DRCA neighborhood includes over 900 households in Arlington.

You did not include this bill in your "Affordable Virginia Agenda" -- unlike others specifically addressing the goal of promoting affordable housing. Many of us agree with that goal. But as the Virginia Association of Counties has made clear in its recent letter, totally abrogating local planning and zoning authority over appropriate site specific conditions for redevelopment projects, in this discriminatory fashion, is inconsistent with longstanding state laws and policies, including the Commonwealth's statutory mandate for local comprehensive plans. Before determining the appropriate course of action on SB388, we urge you to consult with local elected officials who are charged with implementing these laws and policies in Arlington, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Alexandria, and other jurisdictions.

We understand that this bill differs in significantly respects from prior bills designed to promote nonprofit affordable housing projects, and that a number of legislators who voted for the conference version without a reenactment clause were unaware of these features. These include a per se requirement of approval for any qualifying entity allowing density, height, setback, and design to be dictated not by traditional site-specific factors, but by the highest and densest nearby development. The scope of this exception in Arlington alone would be enormous. The Arlington County Manager recently identified some 200 churches that would be eligible under SB388, as well as many other nonprofits whose numbers he could not begin to estimate.

Nor is it clear what "environmental laws" and other regulations remain applicable to such projects, or how localities would administer those requirements. For example, as an exercise of its zoning and planning authority, Arlington has established a guideline in Plan Langston Boulevard seeking 35% tree canopy for projects in that corridor. This would ensure that less affluent residents of affordable housing developments in the neighborhood do not forego the many benefits of tree canopy protections available to others.

There are also many other complex issues raised by SB388 that a reenactment clause would permit needed time to address. These include what it means for a zoning ordinance to be "deemed" to permit certain specified height or density "at a minimum." And when buildings need to be "existing" to qualify for the benchmarking used in the bill. And what nonresidential uses are "ancillary" to the mission of a church. And what if any limitations

there are to how the nonprofit, consistent with tax laws, would share management, operation, revenues, and expenses with the developer.

For all these reasons, we urge you to return SB588 with the reenactment clause passed by the House of Delegates.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these views.

William R. Richardson, Jr.
President
Donaldson Run Civic Association
Arlington, VA

On Mon, Mar 23, 2026 at 9:37 AM Sandi Chesrown <sandrachesrown07@verizon.net> wrote:

March 23, 2026

Honorable Abigail Spanberger, Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia

RE: Request to Revise/Amend and Return SB388 to Legislature or to Veto SB388

Dear Governor Spanberger:

Please do not approve Senate Bill (SB)388 (Affordable housing; religious organizations and other nonprofit tax-exempt properties.)

We strongly support affordable housing, but the bill is not the answer. There has been no stakeholder engagement.

Even the local churches I spoke with are totally unaware. This is shocking and unfortunate.

One of the most important powers of local government is land use planning and zoning.

Yet the bill removes that power and gives it to the state - a top down approach that frustratingly feels MAGA-like.

The bill is **not clear on how development on faith based or non profit land would be implemented.**

When implemented, it would most likely be in direct **conflict with Arlington's General Land Use Plan (GLUP).**

Yet the GLUP is required by the State as part of our Comprehensive Plan.

In residential districts it would probably be in **conflict with the Zoning Ordinance.**

There is **no link to smart growth and mass transit - only maximums on parking.**

It allows mixed use developments, which could be positive. But there are no controls on impacts.

It does not emphasize senior affordable housing, which is important for increased supply.

The only aspect that is clear is that the legislation requires compliance with the Building Code.

Stormwater management is a big issue in Arlington with **increased flooding and nearly 100 year-old pipes.**

Flood control would only be partially addressed by a Land Disturbance permit under the Building Code.

In these times of insecurity due to national and international policies, this additional strife is not the answer.

A 'faith based' bill will be robbing our neighborhoods of their faith in a decades old local power over land use.

This could impact up to 200 properties or more in Arlington- including large sites like Missionhurst.

It will leave very big decisions up to churches and communities with little professional guidance from County staff.

There would be no site plan review process, including commission expertise, or planning commission and County Board hearings.

We strongly urge you and your staff to consult and **work with the Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) to craft revisions to SB388.**

Please improve the bill's outcomes and head off negative unintended consequences.

If you choose not to submit corrections to SB388, we urge you to VETO the bill and mandate a legislative do-over.

Local communities need more time to identify the pros and cons of the bill.

Thank you for your consideration - we are counting on your leadership.

Sincerely,

Sandi Chesrown, AICP, President, Waverly Hills Civic Association

President, Waverly Hills Civic Association
Co-founder, Langston Boulevard Alliance
Vice Chair, Langston Boulevard Area Plan
Board Member, Advance Arlington
Board Member, Arlington Artists Alliance