

Support Budget Amendments 368 #11h (Del. Carr) & 368 #2s (Sen. Jones) Richmond's Combined Sewer Overflow Project

Honorable Members of the General Assembly,

We request the General Assembly's support for the budget amendments of \$100 million in both FY27 and FY28 to contribute Commonwealth resources to the completion of the City of Richmond's Combined Sewer System (CSS) infrastructure upgrades mandated by the state and supported by the City. This \$200 million represents half of the predicted cost of the final remaining project to meet nutrient reduction goals, the Shockoe High Rate Disinfection facility. DEQ has approved and continues to monitor this work, and we're grateful for the General Assembly's help to accelerate the process.

To date, \$822.5 million in today's dollars have been spent and dedicated to this work from city, state, and grant investments. Despite this progress, significant rain events still overwhelm the system. On average, Richmond's CSS releases 2 billion gallons of overflow per year, roughly 10% of which is untreated wastewater.

With GA support in this biennium, the Richmond CSS will remain on track to improve water quality not just for the City, but for the James River watershed and the Chesapeake Bay. Once completed, the projects in the Interim and Final Plans (14/15 of which are underway) will reduce bacteria load from Richmond's CSS by 70% - this is essential to restoring healthy river ecology, supporting native fish and aquatic life, and advancing long-term conservation of one of Virginia's most important natural resources.

The James River is the life source of Central Virginia's tourism and recreation industry, with over 2 million people visiting Downtown Richmond's riverfront Canal Walk, parks and trails in 2025, many to connect directly with the water by rafting, kayaking, or fishing. The completion of the CSS Final Plan with State support will address longstanding issues and have positive ripple effects on economic vitality in an array of industries.

With a poverty rate nearly double that of the Commonwealth's, and a wastewater utility rate that is among the highest in Virginia, the City of Richmond seeks a partnership with the Commonwealth to fund planned and approved improvements. With state funding, ratepayers will share rather than shoulder the burden, while continuing to improve water quality for all Virginians. Without support, the GA's 2035 deadline could be at risk, and with existing infrastructure needs, ratepayers could face increases of 40% by 2035, exceeding the EPA's established affordability threshold.

Our organizations stand together in requesting that you **protect our environment, our economy, and Richmond ratepayers**: support two hundred million dollars in much-needed state funding over the biennium for Richmond's Combined Sewer Overflow project implementation.

For more information, Richmond's Intergovernmental Affairs Director can be reached at ruth.morrison@rva.gov.

