



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

General Assembly Recognizes Holistic Measures to Reduce Poverty and Urban Revitalization

Virginia First Cities' Community Wealth Building Legislative Agenda Gets Traction

Richmond, VA - February 25, 2017 – The Virginia General Assembly budget for FY 2018 includes \$7.5 million for a groundbreaking poverty fighting measure pioneered by several Virginia First Cities' members, including Charlottesville, Richmond, Norfolk, and Lynchburg.

The Virginia Community Wealth Building Grant Fund will be administered by the Virginia Department of Social Services and available to assist localities that undertake holistic measures designed to move individuals and families into employment and sustainability.

Kristin Szakos, Chair of Virginia First Cities and a member of the Charlottesville City Council said, *“Creating vibrant, strong communities means taking a hard look at all members of society and providing supports that are life-changing and sustaining for those who have been left out of our growing economy. Our cities have incubated the Community Wealth Building approach to fighting poverty and we’ve witnessed the change when government, non-profits, and other community partners join forces to move the needle. We are enormously thankful to the General Assembly for their recognition, and now their contribution, so that this approach may be modeled in other localities”*

Kelly Harris-Braxton, Executive Director of VFC said, *“Our thanks to the bipartisan coalition that worked so hard to enable the funding for the Community Wealth Building Fund and other VFC proposals. From Senators Hanger and Ruff, to Delegates Peace and Sickles, and the members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, our sincere thanks for your important work.”*

Virginia First Cities' advocacy efforts on behalf of its 12 members met with resounding success this session. Virginia First Cities' community wealth building-themed legislative program and the state budget adopted by the 2017 General Assembly includes:

Urban Revitalization

- Restored funding for the Virginia Brownfields Remediation Program
- Restored funding for the Virginia Enterprise Zone Program
- Aid to Local Police Departments funded at the Governor's Introduced Budget level

At-Risk Education

- \$1 million in FY18 for Master Teacher Residency programs
- Removal of budget language that cut funding to schools making progress and achieving accreditation in the Extended Day/ Year Funding Program (also known as Year Round Schools).

Human Services

- Updates to the locality groupings for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program with a resulting increase in payments to recipients.

Virginia First Cities is the state advocacy coalition for 12 of the state's oldest and most historic cities. Our cities coalesce around critical issue areas: urban economic development, at-risk education, human services, and public safety. Our public policy advocacy and best practices have resulted in the continued revitalization of Virginia's urban core. We invite all of Virginia's cities to join our coalition.

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Virginia First Cities' members: Charlottesville, Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Martinsville, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, Staunton, Winchester

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