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**Virginia State President’s report**

**July 2022-June 2023**

***VAHCDO Membership Benefits:***

The Virginia Association of Housing and Community Development Officials (VAHCDO) is one of the oldest and most recognized leaders of housing associations in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It was duly organized to assist redevelopment and housing agencies in providing safe, decent, and affordable housing and building vibrant communities. All work is accomplished through a volunteer board which is comprised of representatives of affordable housing professionals from across the Commonwealth.

Membership benefits include networking, training, and education opportunities along with State and Federal advocacy. During this past year, the following activities were provided by VAHCDO:

***Networking****:*

VAHCDO held or sponsored several events during the past year to create opportunities for members to engage and learn from other entities, including sponsorship of the Governor’s Housing Conference and the Virginia Housing Alliance Tax Credit Conference along with hosting the Legal Seminar and Annual Conference and Scholarship Luncheon.

***State and Federal Advocacy:***

VAHCDO works closely with other state and federal associations to advocate and educate legislators and key policy makers of the formulation of policy and funding of key housing and community development programs. Partnerships include the National Association of Housing and Community Development Officials, National Low Income Housing Tax Credit Coalition, Virginia Housing, the National Association of Housing and Community Development Officials (NAHRO) and their Southeastern Regional Council (SERC), and the Virginia Housing Alliance.

VAHCDO ran a successful legislative agenda in the 2023 Virginia General Assembly session. The legislative team was able to advance legislation that helps both housing providers and tenants as well as limit or, stop altogether, legislation that would harm the housing authority community. Below is a summary of relevant bills and results of legislative actions taken on the bills. Please be aware that all 2023 bills that passed have been signed into law and became effective July 1, 2023.

***Virginia Legislative Issues:***

* **HB 1735 – Statement of Tenant Rights and Responsibilities Disclosure** 
  + This was a VAHCDO-sponsored bill that was introduced by Delegate Schuyler VanValkenburg. The bill offered technical amendments that clarified requirements of the tenant rights and responsibilities disclosure. The original law required that the tenant sign an acknowledgment form that they received the disclosure. However, housing providers had instances where a tenant either failed or refused to sign the acknowledgment form. This led to judicial confusion when cases of unlawful detainer were brought before a court with some judges refusing to move forward on cases until the acknowledgment form had been signed.
  + The new requirement only requires a housing provider to record when the tenant rights and responsibilities disclosure has been provided to the tenant.
  + VAHCDO garnered the support of the Virginia REALTORS and VAMMHA and worked closely with the Virginia Poverty Law Center to position this bill for success. After going into conference committee, the final passage of this bill was 93(Y)-0(N) in the House of Delegates, and 40(Y)-0(N) in the Senate. The bill became law July 1, 2023.
* **HB 1771 – Expansion of the Communities of Opportunity Tax Credit (COTC)**
* HB 1771 was another VAHCDO-sponsored bill and was carried by Delegate Rodney Willett. Delegate Willett was successful in geographically expanding the COTC from the Richmond, Northern Virginia, and Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads regions to the entire state. Therefore, increasing the available amount of the tax credit was the next logical step. The existing $250,000 pool of funds was fully subscribed to in 2021, and so, VAHCDO sought to increase the pool to $1 million due to the expansion of COTC, now being offered statewide.
* The bill was discussed thoroughly in committee and was given favorable comments from both Democrats and Republicans on the committee. Unfortunately, the increase was not in the scope of budgetary priorities for 2023, and the bill was gently laid on the table. The team continues to work with DHCD and other stakeholders to posture this bill for success in the 2024 General Assembly session. They are also identifying possible patrons in both the House and Senate to carry this bill in 2024.
* **HB 1614/SB 1384 – Housing Authorities and Common Household Pets**
* HB 1614 and SB 1384 sought to require housing authorities to permit tenants to own or maintain one or more common household pet(s). This bill would have allowed tenants to have any number of pets without any weight or size limitations regardless of the size or location of the unit. Both versions of this bill failed in the General Laws committee in the House of Delegates. Note: We should expect to see some version of this bill return next year due to the overpopulation of humane society facilities.

***Conferences, Training and Special Events:***

VAHCDO provided a variety of training sessions to support the diverse needs of its membership. Hosted training over the last year include Capital Fund, Commissioner’s Fundamentals, LIHTC, UPCS/INSPIRE, HCV/PH Rent Calculation, Family Self-Sufficiency, and Managing Your Public Housing Maintenance.



In December 2022, VAHCDO held its Legal Seminar in Richmond with legal experts providing updated information on laws affecting affordable housing and redevelopment activities. A highlight of the event is the presentation from Lisa Walker, Executive Director of HDLI on current court rulings affecting housing agencies. Forty-five participants from various housing agencies participated in the seminar.

In May 2023, VAHCDO held its annual conference and scholarship luncheon in Norfolk VA. Activities included a scholarship fundraiser at TopGolf and the luncheon which recognized outstanding student achievement from member agencies who are planning on pursuing further post-secondary education opportunities. Eight scholarships were awarded with $12,000.00 distributed to the awardees. VAHCDO had over 140 participants attending the conference with 12 vendors providing sponsorship.