



## Hampton Roads Military and Federal Facilities Alliance

### Virginia Legislative Priorities for 2024

- **Virginia Military Community Infrastructure Grant Program (VMCIGP):** The military presence in Virginia is a vital component of our economy with a Commonwealth-wide impact of \$105.5 billion accounting for 19% of the economic output and 872,845 direct, indirect, and induced jobs. In 2022, the General Assembly created the VMCIGP to support local infrastructure projects that enhance the value of military installations in the Commonwealth and benefit both the local community and the installations. The biennium budget included \$5 million for the program. Defense communities in Virginia can currently apply for these funds to help offset the non-federal share costs of Department of Defense (DoD) grants with the locality providing a 100% match for the state grant funds. The entire \$5 million was obligated within the first year of the two-year budget cycle, demonstrating a clear need and demand for these funds. The \$5 million investment of Commonwealth funds resulted in \$24 million in DoD grants demonstrating an incredible return on Virginia's investment. We request your support for continuing the VMCIGP in the next biennium budget and increasing the total funding to \$15 million (\$7.5 million each year). We also request support for altering the program so grants can be awarded directly to defense communities instead of being restricted to offsetting the non-federal match of DoD grants.
- **Improving Childcare Access for Military Families:** Securing access to high quality childcare is an imperative to many military families where both parents work, or where the military member is a single parent. In fact, lack of access to childcare in a dual-military family can often lead to one of the military members separating from the service. On-base child development centers (CDCs) cannot accommodate all military children requiring care. For example, Joint Base Langley-Eustis has the largest waitlist for CDC care in the Air Force with nearly 600 families on the list. Navy Region Mid-Atlantic reports 2,200 kids on Hampton Roads Navy installation CDC waitlists. While the military is working to increase childcare capacity on base, they rely extensively on off-base care. The Department of Defense has fee assistance programs (MCCYN/MCCYN+) to help service members with the increased costs for off-base care (up to \$1,800/mo), but there are not enough private providers participating in the program. Out of the 154 licensed childcare providers on the Peninsula, only seven participate in the DoD subsidy program. Only 24 childcare providers on the Southside participate. Additionally, it takes up to 9 months to receive a license for an off-base in-home Family Childcare (FCC) provider. Private childcare providers also face high initial startup costs when trying to establish new care centers. Request your support for several initiatives aimed at increasing childcare access for military families as well as expanding childcare capacity in general throughout the Commonwealth.
  - Incentivize providers to participate in DoD fee assistance programs through state grants or tax credits.





- Prioritize FCC in-home licensing and background investigations for childcare business providers supporting military families.
- Provide new business grants (\$1M) to support the establishment of new childcare providers that support military families and offer priority enrollment for military children.
- Provide grants to childcare business providers for management software to support real-time visibility on childcare availability across the Commonwealth.
  - 100% grant for MCCYN/MCCYN+ participating providers
  - 50% grant for non-participating providers
- Funding to support Childcare Aware of Virginia's (CCAoVA) increased efforts to support military families in the Commonwealth and development of a WorkLife Solutions military-focused web search engine.
  - Integrate all available childcare providers (military, non-military) with school and housing data.
  - \$89K in startup development, then \$38K annually (+\$12K/yr to existing VDOE funding)
  - \$285K to increase provider participation in DoD fee assistance program, assist filling critical regional childcare gaps, survey existing childcare providers, recruiting and supporting additional providers.
- **Military Spouse Employment:** Military spouse careers are often interrupted by the frequent moves required of military members. A common barrier is the transfer of licenses or certifications from one state to another. Military spouse unemployment or underemployment can lead to retention and readiness issues as military members decide to leave the military to support their spouse employment and family economic needs. HRMFFA supports several initiatives to improve military spouse employment in Virginia.
  - Request the Commonwealth include military spouses in their Virginia Values Veterans Employment Grant program to incentivize hiring of military spouses. The grant program currently offers private employers \$2,500 for every eligible veteran hired up to \$25,000.
  - We urge Virginia to join the remaining seven interstate licensing compacts for Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, Cosmetology, Dental and Dental Hygienist, Massage Therapy, Teachers, Physician Associates, and Social Work.
- **Recurrent Flooding:** One need only look at a map of the Federal installations in Hampton Roads to realize most of them are on the water and susceptible to sea level rise, storm surge, and persistent flooding. Department of Defense leaders in the Pentagon are also becoming more aware of environmental risks to installations in Hampton Roads and elsewhere. While the various installations are working to make themselves more resilient, 70 – 80% of their personnel live off base in the surrounding





communities. Even if a base is protected from flooding, the mission will be negatively impacted if personnel cannot get there due to impassable roads or critical off-base utility systems are off-line due to flooding. Virginia and Hampton Roads must address these concerns collectively to ensure the future viability of many of our federal installations.

- Request the Commonwealth establish a permanent Chief Resilience Officer with dedicated staff to oversee implementation of Virginia's Coastal Resilience Master Plan.
  - Request the Commonwealth provide \$200 million per year through the Commonwealth Flood Protection Program to assist localities with flood prevention efforts.
- **Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) Priority Items:** The Department of Defense DSLO provides state policymakers with insight on priorities affecting military families and their quality of life. The initiative is part of the Department of Defense's efforts to identify and address the most pressing needs of service members and military families. Request support for implementing DSLO priorities that have not yet been addressed in Virginia to include:
- **Defining Armed Forces:** Recent force structure changes require updates to ensure that states' definitions of military service comport with federal law. States can minimize disruptions in benefits and services for eligible service members and dependents by clearly defining "armed forces."
  - **Open Enrollment Flexibility:** Military families are at a disadvantage when it comes to enrollment options available to their children due to military-directed reassignments. Request your support to ensure that school districts provide military families with flexibility when it comes to the enrollment options available to their children.
  - **Licensure Exemptions for Military Family Childcare Providers:** In many cases, military family childcare providers must be licensed or registered by the state in addition to the military. Request support for exempting providers already certified through the military.
  - **Military and Family Life Counselor Licensure Waiver:** The state licensure process can be a barrier to providing timely mental health support to service members and families. Request support for expediting licensure, waiving licensure, or adopting occupational licensure compacts to reduce this barrier.

