



Meeting Summary
Local Rent Regulation Workgroup Meeting
Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.
Senate Room C, General Assembly Building

Attendance

- **Members Present:** Sen. Mamie E. Locke, Sen. Lashrecse D. Aird, Del. Briana D. Sewell, Bismah Ahmed, Andrew Clark, Laura Dobbs, Michelle Gowdy, Randy Grumbine, Zach LeMaster, Joe Lerch, Isabel McLain, DJ Spiker, and Larisa Zehr.
- **Staff Present:** Director Jesseca Hoff, Molly Bowers
- **Public Present:** Approximately 54 individuals.

Call to Order & Overview

Senator Mamie Locke called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Staff Update

Jesseca Hoff, *Executive Director*, presented the staff's research, classifying Virginia's proposed rent regulation framework as a "rigid model" (a strict 3% cap with no dynamic inflation buffers). She shared that a financial model indicated smaller landlords, and even larger multifamily properties, would face financial challenges under a 3% cap if inflation remains high. She noted the policy is often successful at controlling rents for tenants but may lead to unintended market consequences that are outlined in the staff report. She also stated that staff will continue updating the report to serve as a living document for local governments and legislators.

Workgroup Discussion

The Workgroup disagreed on the effectiveness of rent control as a policy tool.

- **Randy Grumbine:** Expressed concern regarding manufactured home communities. He stated that out-of-state operators look for favorable state markets before deploying capital. He warned that if existing community owners are restricted in their revenue streams, they might decide the property is better used for other purposes, which would take affordable housing units off the market entirely.
- **Laura Dobbs:** Emphasized the need to focus on tenants, who are frequently asked to pay higher rents for deteriorating conditions. She argued that relying on individual tenants to sue their landlords carries too much risk, whereas rent regulation ensures rent increases are tied to property improvements. She moved to send the bill as drafted to the full commission.
- **Senator Aird:** Echoed Ms. Dobbs, highlighting the exacerbation of rent increases and poor conditions for renters. She argued that the sheer volume of recent tenant protections shows state of renting in the Commonwealth. She recognized there were not enough votes to move the bill forward but pleaded with the patron and advocates to keep working toward a compromise, stressing the need for a solution beyond just increasing housing stock.
- **Andrew Clark:** Stated that the solution requires increasing supply while preserving the current quality housing stock. He advocated for relying on existing, successful tools like Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), historic tax credits, and opportunity zones. He expressed concern that rent control might undercut private investment in these programs.
- **Larisa Zehr:** Shared an anecdote about residents of a Prince William County manufactured housing community receiving \$120 lot rent increases from an out-of-state owner they can only

contact via email. She argued that renters are stuck and subject to price gouging and asked if the workgroup could move the policy forward to stabilize communities and prevent displacement.

- **Joe Lerch:** Suggested that the bill's unintended consequences could be addressed through drafting changes. He likened the concept to affordable dwelling unit ordinances, suggesting rent regulation could be made available only to certain geographic areas and require localities to bring all stakeholders together to craft their specific ordinances.
- **Senator Boysko (Bill Patron):** Outlined the severity of the housing crisis, noting that a third of Virginians are renters, rent has increased 30% since 2019, and Virginia houses five of the top ten cities for evictions. She defended her bill by pointing out it targets excessive profit-taking, not cost recovery, and includes a "fair rate of return" for landlords facing increased costs like mortgage hikes. She emphasized her openness to compromises, including a non-profit exemption, extending the new construction exemption to 15 years, implementing a rental registry, and discussing vacancy decontrol if "just cause" eviction protections are added.
- **DJ Spiker:** Stated his opposition to the bill, noting that many on the panel and his organization oppose it. Due to the lack of cohesion on the originally drafted bill, he recommended not moving it forward for further discussion.
- **Delegate Simon:** Observed that the group was completely split and lacked the consensus usually required to advance a recommendation. He pointed out that regional data is mixed, noting that rents naturally decreased by 1.5% in Northern Virginia without rent control, making cause-and-effect hard to prove. He concluded there was no value in advancing a split decision to the full commission.
- **Zach LeMaster:** Agreed with Spiker and Del. Simon, stating there is a fundamental disagreement among the panel on whether rent control is good policy, leaving little to no room for negotiation or finding a middle ground.
- **Bismah Ahmed:** Concurred with Delegate Simon and Zach. She warned against adopting a short-term solution that economists warn could dramatically deter housing supply, thereby failing to help the affordability issue in the long run. She seconded the notion not to recommend the bill.

Adjournment & Next Steps

Senator Locke, Chair, stated that the workgroups do not provide official endorsement. Instead, they would present a report detailing their split opinions to the full Virginia Housing Commission at the subsequent 10:00 AM meeting. The full body would make the final decision in November. The meeting adjourned at 9:34 a.m.