COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Department Of Human Resource Management

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The Honorable Abigail Spanberger, Governor of Virginia
The Honorable Luke Torian, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

Subject: Progress Report on Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

In accordance with **§ 2.2-203.2:3(H) of the Code of Virginia**, I am pleased to submit the Commonwealth's annual Progress Report on Employment Opportunities for individuals with disabilities within executive branch agencies. This cycle marks a turning point: for the first time, the Commonwealth measures this population through an independent, enterprise-level data source rather than agency self-report alone. That advance lets us report our progress with new precision, and to be candid about the distance that remains between where self-reported figures placed us and where complete, validated measurement now places us.

A record 104 of the 106 Executive Branch agencies required to submit filed plans this year, a 98.1% compliance rate, the highest in the program's history. I want to be clear that this is a milestone worth marking, and that the more demanding questions this report raises about *plan quality* and *complete measurement* are the natural next chapter of a program that is maturing, not evidence of retreat.

Please contact me if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

Janet L. Lawson

Janet L. Lawson
Director

Enclosures
cc: Secretary Traci J. Deshazor

I. Executive Summary

Pursuant to § 2.2-203.2:3 of the *Code of Virginia*, each executive branch agency submits an annual plan to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and the Secretary of Administration, in collaboration with the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), reports annually on the Commonwealth's progress. The defining development of FY2026 is a change in how that progress is measured: the transition from agency self-reported data to system-validated measurement.

Since 2017, progress under the statute has been reported based on agency-submitted plans and self-reported figures for **classified positions only**. On that basis, classified representation rose steadily, from 0.51% in 2017 to approximately 6.1% in FY2026, and the five percent goal was reported as met. That progress is genuine and reflects sustained work on the recruitment side of the workforce lifecycle.

For the first time, this cycle validates reporting against the statewide workforce analytics dashboard: the Commonwealth's first independent, enterprise-level measurement source. Measured on the complete population the statute contemplates, **all positions across all agencies**, statewide employment of individuals with disabilities is **3.54%** (4,909 of 138,708 employees), below the five percent goal in subsection B. Measured on the dashboard for **classified positions**, representation is **4.70%** (2,675 of 56,943), also below five percent, and lower than the 6.1% the self-reported plan submissions indicated. These divergences are reported as a data-quality finding, not a regression: they reflect the introduction of a more comprehensive and accurate measurement source that captures the full statewide workforce. Because the dashboard includes employees and position types that were not fully represented in prior self-reported data, the differences indicate improved visibility into the workforce rather than an actual decrease in employment of individuals with disabilities.

Two milestones and one early signal frame the year. First, **104 of 106 required Executive Branch state agencies submitted plans (98.1%)**, the highest compliance in program history. Second, DHRM introduced an internal **submission scorecard for** this cycle; a new and distinct measure of plan *quality*, separate from the question of whether an agency submitted at all. Third, while recruitment indicators are strong, **internal mobility appears to lag**; this is a signal, not a finding, because the current dashboard cannot yet validate it.

Accordingly, this report's central recommendation is to instrument the dashboard to track internal mobility within each Executive Branch agency, expand system-validated measurement toward all positions and levels, require all types of position data in agency plans, and move to quarterly reviews so representation is monitored year-round rather than annually through a single annual pull.

II. Statutory Authority and Purpose

Section 2.2-203.2:3 of the *Code of Virginia* establishes as the policy of the Commonwealth the promotion and increase of the employment of individuals with disabilities *at all levels and occupations* within executive branch agencies. Subsection B sets the goal of increasing the level of such employment by five percent and directs the Secretary to coordinate efforts to achieve it. Subsection D requires each agency to submit a plan by July 1 annually and directs the Secretary to establish content guidelines and a tracking-and-reporting system. Subsection H requires the Secretary to report agency progress to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations by September 1. This report fulfills that requirement.

Consistent with subsection F, nothing in this report or the underlying process requires the creation of new positions, changes to qualification standards, or the involuntary disclosure of disability status. Detailed demographic data is reported separately in DHRM's annual demographic report pursuant to subsection G.

III. Measurement: From an Annual Classified Pull to Statewide All-Position Tracking

The statute applies to individuals with disabilities employed at all levels and occupations. Historically, DHRM measured progress through an annual data pull limited to classified positions, consistent with the long-standing interpretation that Governor, the Secretary of Administration, and DHRM have purview only over covered (classified) employees. Beginning with the FY2021 template, agencies were instructed to report classified employees only, and those counts became the baseline for assessing progress from FY2021 through FY2025.

In FY2026, with full Cardinal adoption and deployment of the Commonwealth HR Data Dashboard, DHRM established measurement spanning all position types across all agencies, enabling a complete measurement of the covered population for the first time and replacing the once-a-year pull with the capacity for year-round tracking. Because the FY2026 dashboard figure rests on a complete and different population, it is *not directly comparable* to prior-year self-reported figures. Section IV presents both bases to make the difference transparent. Where the two diverge, the divergence is a measure of how far self-report departed from a validated count, the intended product of a maturing measurement system.

IV. Statewide Results

A. Employment of Individuals with Disabilities — Progress Toward the Five Percent Goal

Measurement basis	With disabilities	Total workforce	Rate	vs. 5% goal
All positions — dashboard (system-validated)	4,909	138,708	**3.54%**	**Below**
Classified only — dashboard (system-validated)	2,675	56,943	**4.70%**	**Below**
Classified only — agency plan submissions (self-reported)	3,623	58,995	**6.14%**	**Met**

The all-positions (Classified, Salaried-nonclassified and wage) figure is the measure consistent with the statutory scope; on this basis the Commonwealth has not yet met the five percent goal. The classified-only columns are retained to reflect the achievement recorded under the prior self-reported method and to show the effect of more complete measurement. The self-reported and dashboard classified figures do not fully reconcile; closing that gap is a FY2027 data-quality priority (Section VII).

B. Longitudinal Trend — Self-Reported Classified Representation (2017–2026)

Year	Representation (self-reported, classified)	Employees w/ disabilities	Agency compliance
2017	0.51%	321	—
2018	0.91%	574	—
2019	0.61%	—	90%
2020	0.63%	366	83%
2021	2.84%	1,260	65%
2022	2.69%	1,147	65%
2023	3.85%	1,886	88%
2024	4.83%	2,218	71%
2025	5.53%	2,911	78.7%
2026	**6.14%**	**3,623**	**98.1% (104/106)**

This series is the agency-reported, classified-only measure used since 2017. The FY2026 dashboard figures in panel A are a separate, more complete basis and should not be read as the next point on this line.

C. Alternative Hiring Process (AHP) and Veteran Outcomes

Measure	FY2025	FY2026	Change
AHP letters requested	1,342	1,341	~flat
AHP letters issued	673	755	+12%
Issuance rate	50%	56%	+6 pts
AHP hires (executive branch + VCCS)	83	68	−18%
AHP hires of which are DARS vocational-rehab participants	16	26	+63%
Classified veterans with disabilities	350	417	+19%

Source: DHRM—DARS Liaison monthly PageUp reports (see Appendix C). These are the Liaison's operational AHP figures; agency self-reported submissions separately recorded 2,647 AHP applications and 73 hires in FY2026, with 40 transitioning to full-time classified — a self-report/validated divergence being reconciled, consistent with this report's measurement theme. AHP Overview orientation reached 311 candidates in FY2026 (170 vocational-rehabilitation, 141 non-VR), up from 241 in FY2025.

D. Agency Participation

Metric	FY2026
Agencies required to submit	106
Plans submitted	**104 — 98.1% compliance (all-time high; FY25 78.7%)**
Pre-work survey responses	~59
Agencies on the DHRM review roster	~122 listed (independent / not-required agencies excepted)
Plans reviewed under the scorecard	104 submissions; see Section VII and Appendix D

V. Agency Compliance and the New Question of Plan Quality

FY2026 records the highest submission compliance in the program's history: 104 of the 106 agencies required to submit filed plans, a 98.1% compliance rate, up from 78.7% in FY2025. The agencies that did not submit are independent or not required to file under past practice.

Compliance answers only whether an agency submitted. It does not answer whether the plan is *good*, whether its data is complete and reconciled, and whether its action items are specific,

measurable, and responsive to the agency's own workforce data. FY2026 introduces that second question as a distinct measure for the first time, through the submission scorecard described in Section VII. Separating **did they submit** from **is the plan actionable** is the central methodological advance on the agency-accountability side of this cycle.

VI. DHRM Actions and Supporting Programs in FY2026

Statewide all-position dashboard. DHRM built and deployed the Commonwealth HR Data Dashboard, giving the Commonwealth a complete, continuously updatable view of employment of individuals with disabilities across all agencies and position types, and resolving, at the enterprise level, the data-collection burden that previously fell to agencies.

Pre-work survey (new this cycle). Approximately 59 agencies completed a pre-work survey that asked them to recall prior-cycle goals, name successes and barriers, assess readiness to submit, and indicate where DHRM could help. The most frequently named priorities were training and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) awareness (31), recruitment pipelines (27), retention and engagement (26), accommodation processes (18), and accessibility improvements (8).

Alternative Hiring Process (AHP). The AHP provides a non-competitive path to state employment for individuals with disabilities under DHRM Policy 2.10, using an AHP Letter issued by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitation (DARS) or the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI). In FY2026, DARS and DBVI issued 755 AHP Letters against 1,341 requests (a 56% issuance rate, up from 50% in FY2025), and the process produced 68 hires across executive-branch agencies (51) and the VCCS (17), 26 of them candidates who came through DARS vocational rehabilitation. AHP Overview orientation sessions reached 311 candidates. These operational figures come from the DHRM-DARS Liaison's monthly PageUp reports (see Appendix C).

Disability-inclusion training (DARS partnership / Windmills). In partnership with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, DARS delivered Windmills disability-inclusion training in support of the AHP, building hiring-manager and HR-staff capacity to recruit and retain individuals with disabilities. Seventeen agencies documented active DARS partnerships in FY2026 — six participating in Windmills training (including VDOT, VCU, Virginia Tech, Radford, UVA-Wise, and DEQ), five community colleges in DARS workforce-development and recruitment programs, and others in recruitment-sharing and training participation (see Appendix C). Session- and participant-level Windmills counts are maintained in the DARS training log.

Technical assistance. DHRM returned individualized feedback summarizing each plan's strengths and areas for revision and offered consulting sessions to agencies whose submissions needed development.

VII. Submission Scorecard — Year-One Status

Beginning in FY2026, DHRM Talent Management introduced an EOP submission scorecard to apply consistent, criteria-based review to agency plans. The scorecard is an internal review and feedback tool, not a published ranking; its purpose is to standardize how DHRM evaluates submissions and to raise the baseline quality of future plans through structured, specific feedback returned to each agency. This is a pilot-year rollout, and results in this section are reported as program status rather than a final agency-by-agency verdict.

The rubric scores four areas on a 0–3 scale per criterion, for 57 possible points:

Section	Focus	Criteria	Points
A. Compliance & Submission Mechanics	On-time submission, correct template and file naming, signatures, completeness	4	12
B. Agency Profile & Strategies	Specific, verifiable recruiting and accommodation strategies; named outreach partners	4	12
C. Data Quality	Complete, classified-scoped, internally consistent and reconciled data; anomalies explained	6	18
D. Action Plan Quality	Specific, measurable, data-responsive action items across the full employment lifecycle	5	15

Bands: Exemplary (48–57), Meets (36–47), Needs Revision (24–35), Insufficient (below 24). Data Quality (Section C) carries the most weight because agency data rolls up into this statewide report; the credibility of the figures in Section IV depends on it.

Year-one status: criteria-based scoring is now complete for all 104 submissions. Section A (compliance mechanics) was finalized on August 24, 2026, for the 48 agencies previously scored provisionally, so every submission now carries a full four-section score. The results below are draft findings for DHRM validation, intended to inform the FY2027 cycle rather than to serve as a public ranking; the best-practice list and full set of recurring improvement themes appear in Appendix D.

Across the 104 scored plans, the band distribution is as follows:

Band	Score range	Agencies	Share
Exemplary	48–57	3	2.9%
Meets Expectations	36–47	76	73.1%
Needs Revision	24–35	22	21.2%
Insufficient	below 24	3	2.9%

Band	Score range	Agencies	Share
Total	**—**	**104**	**100%**

Three plans reached the Exemplary band — Virginia Commonwealth University (50 of 57), the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (48), and the Department of Transportation (48) and eleven plans were flagged as carrying a best practice worth sharing across agencies. Consistent with the principle that following law and policy is expected rather than exemplary, plans that satisfied every compliance requirement but set no new targets remained in the Meets Band; an Exemplary rating required demonstrated prior-year progress and measurable, data-responsive action items beyond baseline compliance. Section-level scoring locates where quality concentrates and where it thins: plans score highest on compliance mechanics (mean 9.0 of 12) and agency profile and strategies (8.9 of 12), and lowest on action-plan quality (9.0 of 15, or 60% of the possible points) — the only section spanning the full range from 0 to 15. Ten submissions contained no action plan at all.

The most frequently returned improvement recommendations, in order of frequency, were to name specific outreach partners such as DARS, DBVI, and the AHP (54 plans); to report prior-year progress — what was tried, what worked, and what carries forward (36); to sharpen action items with named owners, deadlines, and metrics (28); to tie action items to the agency's own workforce data (18); and to add all-position context beyond classified positions in line with FY2027 guidance (15).

VIII. Findings: Challenges and Opportunities

Close the gap to five percent across all position types. With complete measurement now available, the priority is extending the gains recorded in classified positions to non-classified categories, where representation is lower and self-identification is historically thinner.

Reconcile self-reported and validated data. The classified self-reported figure (6.14%) and the classified dashboard figure (4.70%) do not fully reconcile. Establishing the dashboard as the standing basis, and understanding the sources of divergence, is a near-term data-quality task.

Internal mobility — an early signal. Recruitment indicators are strong, but promotions and internal advancement of employees with disabilities appear limited in the FY2026 data. The dashboard can flag this pattern but cannot yet validate it, because internal mobility is not tracked as such. It warrants dedicated instrumentation before any conclusion is drawn.

Convert AHP letters into hires. AHP letter issuance rose to 56% in FY2026 (755 of 1,341), but hires did not keep pace; executive-branch and VCCS hires fell from 83 in FY2025 to 68 in FY2026 even as issuance grew. The widening gap between letters issued and hires placed is the

clearest efficiency opportunity in the pipeline, and the reason letters-to-hires conversion should be a tracked FY2027 measure.

IX. Recommendations for the FY2027 Plan Cycle

Drawing on the past two cycles and the new statewide dashboard, DHRM recommends an approach that moves agency effort from assembling data toward setting and monitoring goals.

1. Quarterly review of data and plan goals. Rather than a single annual pull, agencies should review dashboard data and plan goals quarterly, giving earlier visibility into standing and more room to course-correct within the year.

2. Request all-position-type data in agency plans. Extend agency reporting beyond classified positions to match the statutory scope, using the dashboard as the reporting basis and closing the self-report/validated gap.

3. Goal-based report-outs. Next year's report-outs should address each agency's goals, the measures attached to them, and whether goals were met, and where not met, the barrier and the plan to overcome it.

4. Instrument internal mobility. Add promotion and internal-advancement tracking for employees with disabilities to the dashboard so the FY2026 signal can be validated or set aside.

5. Full-cycle scorecard rollout. Move the scorecard from pilot to standard practice, with feedback returned to every agency and best practices shared through an ARC / Learning Lab mechanism.

X. Conclusion

FY2026 gave the Commonwealth, for the first time, a complete and continuously updatable measurement of employment of individuals with disabilities across all agencies and position types. The progress recorded for classified positions demonstrates that focused effort produces results; the more complete measure shows how much of the workforce that earlier view did not capture. With the enterprise data burden now resolved and a record number of agencies participating, DHRM's path forward is disciplined goal setting, quarterly monitoring, honest reconciliation of the two measurement bases, and a scorecard that lifts plan quality, aligning the FY2027 cycle with the full statutory scope and the approaching 2027 accessibility deadline.

Appendix A — Data Notes and Reconciliation

- All-positions dashboard: 4,909 employees with disabilities of 138,708 total = 3.54%.
- Classified dashboard: 2,675 of 56,943 = 4.70%.
- Classified self-reported (agency plan submissions): 3,623 of 58,995 = 6.14% (independently recomputed from the Full Summary workbook as 3,637 of 59,257 = 6.14%; a duplicate agency row — Virginia Board for People with Disabilities #606 — has been removed and the corrected agency figures applied (classified 2 of 10).
- AHP (DHRM—DARS Liaison, PageUp): 1,341 letters requested, 755 issued (56%); 68 hires (51 executive branch, 17 VCCS), 26 via DARS vocational rehabilitation; 311 candidates reached through AHP Overview sessions. Agency self-report separately recorded 2,647 AHP applications and 73 hires (40 to full-time classified); the difference is being reconciled.
- Classified veterans with disabilities: 417.
- Note on estimates to avoid: the data appendix's "9–10%" and "8.48%" figures are means of agency-level rates, not the pooled statewide rate, and should not be used as headline representation figures.

Appendix B — Scorecard Rubric Reference

Four sections, 0–3 per criterion, 57 points total. Sections: A. Compliance & Submission Mechanics (12); B. Agency Profile & Strategies (12); C. Data Quality (18); D. Action Plan Quality (15). Bands: Exemplary 48–57; Meets 36–47; Needs Revision 24–35; Insufficient below 24. The full criterion-level rubric is maintained in the DHRM scorecard workbook.

Appendix C — AHP and Training Data

Source: DHRM–DARS Liaison monthly PageUp reports. Figures below are the Liaison's operational AHP data.

AHP Letters — Requested and Issued

Fiscal Year	Requested	Issued	Issuance rate
FY2022 (Apr–Jun)	—	77	partial year
FY2023	1,078	593	55%
FY2024	1,148	706	62%
FY2025	1,342	673	50%
FY2026	1,341	755	56%

AHP Overview Attendance

Fiscal Year	DARS/DBVI (VR)	Non-VR	Total
FY2024	35	0	35

Fiscal Year	DARS/DBVI (VR)	Non-VR	Total
FY2025	183	58	241
FY2026	170	141	311

The AHP Overview is a two-hour virtual orientation to the Alternative Hiring Process, the Virginia Jobs site, and job-search strategy, with follow-up resources emailed to participants. VR overviews began March 2024; non-VR overviews began February 2025.

AHP Hires

Fiscal Year	Executive Branch	VCCS	DARS VR participants	Total (Ex+VCCS)
FY2023	19	—	—	19
FY2024	74	28	—	102
FY2025	63	20	16	83
FY2026	51	17	26	68

Hire data is drawn from a monthly PageUp report to the Liaison. VCCS tracking began with PageUp in March 2023; DARS-participant identification via PageUp began October 2024. Executive-branch and VCCS AHP hires declined from 102 (FY2024) to 68 (FY2026) even as letters issued rose — a widening letters-to-hires conversion gap.

DARS Partnerships

Seventeen agencies documented active DARS partnerships in FY2026. Six participate in Windmills disability-inclusion training (Department of Transportation, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Tech, Radford University, University of Virginia at Wise, and the Department of Environmental Quality). Five community colleges partner in DARS workforce-development and recruitment programs (Mountain Empire, New River, Southwest Virginia, Virginia Highlands, and Wytheville). The remainder engage through recruitment-sharing (Department of Emergency Management, Department of Rail and Public Transportation) or training participation (Department of Wildlife Resources, Southside Virginia Community College, Virginia Department of Health), with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired as a sister agency.

Appendix D — 57-Point Scorecard Summary

Aggregate results from the FY2026 EOP submission scorecard, drawn from the FY2026 Master Scorecard Tracker as of August 24, 2026. Scoring is complete for all four sections across all 104 scored submissions. These results are for DHRM validation and are not a published agency ranking.

Band distribution. Of 104 scored plans, 79 (76.0%) fell in the Meets band or above and 25 (24.0%) in Needs Revision or below.

Band	Score range	Agencies	Share
Exemplary	48–57	3	2.9%
Meets Expectations	36–47	76	73.1%
Needs Revision	24–35	22	21.2%
Insufficient	below 24	3	2.9%
Total	—	**104**	**100%**

Section-level scoring. Mean score by rubric section across all 104 plans. Action-plan quality (Section D) is the weakest area and the only section with submissions, scoring the full range from 0 to 15.

Rubric section	Max	Mean	% of max
A. Compliance & Submission Mechanics	12	9.0	75%
B. Agency Profile & Strategies	12	8.9	74%
C. Data Quality	18	12.4	69%
D. Action Plan Quality	15	9.0	60%
All sections (Total)	**57**	**39.3**	**69%**

Best-practice submissions (11). Plans flagged as carrying out a practice worth sharing across agencies. The flag marks a specific strength, not overall rank; most flagged plans sit in the Meets band.

Agency (number)	Total (57)	Band
Virginia Commonwealth University (#236)	50	Exemplary
Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (#262)	48	Exemplary
Department of Transportation (#501)	48	Exemplary
Southwest Virginia Community College (#294)	47	Meets
Department of Environmental Quality (#440)	46	Meets
Department of Taxation (#161)	45	Meets
Christopher Newport University (#242)	44	Meets

Agency (number)	Total (57)	Band
Richard Bland College (#241)	44	Meets
Board of Accountancy (#226)	43	Meets
University of Virginia at Wise (#246)	43	Meets
Virginia Employment Commission (#182)	42	Meets

Recurring improvement themes. Improvement recommendations returned to agencies, counted across all plans (each plan typically received two). The count is the number of plans that received each recommendation.

Recommendation returned to agencies	Plans
Name specific outreach partners (DARS, DBVI, AHP, community-college / workforce / veteran partners)	54
Report on prior-year progress: what was tried, what worked, and what carries forward	36
Sharpen action items with named owners, deadlines, and specific metrics	28
Tie action items to the agency's own workforce data and make them disability-specific	18
Add all-position context beyond classified positions, in line with FY2027 guidance	15
Give each objective more than one concrete action to move the measure	13
Convert remaining strategies into measurable targets (baseline → target → owner → date)	12
Describe accommodation practices, including interview-stage accommodations	11
Add concrete action items (what changes, who owns it, by when, and how it is measured)	11
Add objectives and action items — the submission currently has no action plan	10

Methodology and reconciliation. Totals reflect 104 scored submissions. Section A was finalized on August 24, 2026 for the 48 agencies previously scored provisionally; among those, A1 (June 30 statutory deadline) resolved to 21 on time (scored 3), 16 within one to five days late (2), and 11 later (1), with A2–A4 held at the standard value of 2 pending workbook-level compliance review. Scores of 0 in data fields are treated as empty. Per DHRM calibration, adherence to existing law and policy is scored as expected (Meets), not exemplary; structural data absences explained in an agency's narrative are scored as Meets rather than missing.