



May 19, 2020

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce commends the Arlington County government for the flexibility that it is showing in supporting our community's response to the impacts of the coronavirus. Applying funds to the Giving Resilience Assets Near Term (GRANT) program for small businesses and giving retailers permission to hang signs advertising that they are open are two examples of this flexibility.

Arlington's businesses will continue to face challenges as they progress through Forward Virginia, so it is important that they have the best possible conditions, including support for continued attention to health and interpersonal spacing. Phase One limits restaurants to outdoor service. Beyond then, restaurants in space-constrained Arlington will still benefit from more space for serving customers. Arlington County can help restaurants succeed by continuing to embrace flexibility, particularly for outdoor dining.

A simple, administrative process for restaurants to obtain an outdoor seating permit will make it easier to serve customers outside during the coronavirus recovery. Allowing restaurants to use parking lots and street parking spaces for additional outdoor capacity, similar to how they have been allowed to reserve parking space for carryout patrons, will provide additional flexibility for socially distanced service. We also encourage the County to consider block closures where restaurants may set up tables on a pedestrianized right of way to expand overall capacity and maintain distance between patrons.

Arlington still has many restaurants in zoning districts that do not allow outdoor seating, even though dining al fresco would fit their urban streetscape. Expanding outdoor cafes was already a priority for a condensed planning/zoning review this summer. The Chamber encourages Arlington County to bring it forward for expedited action so that these restaurants may expand footprint and serve their customers safely.

We thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Bates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Arlington County Board members Katie Cristol, Matt de Ferranti, and Christian Dorsey; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Deputy County Manager Shannon Flanagan-Watson; Arlington Economic Director Telly Tucker; Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development Director Claude Williamson