



June 3, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam,

The Arlington Chamber encourages the Commonwealth of Virginia to clarify its requirements around masks and distancing in the workplace. The Chamber further encourages the Commonwealth to update or repeal DOLI's Permanent Standard for COVID-19 Workplace Safety to bring the requirements on fully vaccinated workers in line with current CDC guidance. Since the announcement of Executive Order 79, we have been fielding questions from our members who are uncertain about the status of these requirements. These questions are similar to those that the Virginia Chamber of Commerce asked in its letter of May 27.

Many businesses are confused about if and how the Permanent Standard is to be enforced following the implementation of Executive Order 79 and general lifting of the mask mandate, which seem to supersede it even though the order does not repeal it. The Commonwealth's messaging has also been inconsistent on this matter, as recent messages based on CDC guidance say that masks are unnecessary for fully vaccinated people, but the Permanent Standard does not mention the vaccine. Moreover, the Forward Virginia FAQ page seems to say both that masks are and are not required for fully vaccinated employees at their place of work. In addition to this confusion, many of the Permanent Standard's requirements on businesses and employees now vary greatly from requirements on the customers they are serving and the general public with no underlying rationale for that difference.

It is important that all levels of government adjust to the new challenges of recovery and adapt to the widespread availability of coronavirus vaccines. Executive Order 79 and last month's general lifting of the mask mandate recognized these changes, and we encourage the Commonwealth to continue to implement updated CDC guidance for all Virginians, including when in the workplace.

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: Chief of Staff Clark Mercer, Secretary of Commerce and Trade Brian Ball, Secretary of Health and Human Resources Daniel Carey, Chief Workforce Advisor Megan Healy