



June 12, 2023

Christian Dorsey  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Dorsey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports Items 43 and 44 on the County Board agenda, Requesting to Advertise public hearings to consider permanent amendments to the Zoning Ordinance concerning outdoor dining and seating spaces.

The Chamber has advocated over the past three years for the retention of Temporary Outdoor Seating Areas (TOSAs) and the implementation of regulations to solidify their status as permanent additions to Arlington's streetscape. We hope that the County Board passes this Request to Advertise, and ultimately adopts the proposed amendments at the July 15 Board meeting. We appreciate Staff's efforts on outdoor dining, including the Future of Outdoor Dining (FOOD) study, and the proposed Ordinance amendment that recognizes the importance of regulatory continuity.

We strongly urge the County to employ the instruments and policies needed to ensure a smooth transition for restaurants, as well as ensure preparation for the number of establishments seeking permits after the July Board meeting, so that the process can be seamless. We are currently awaiting more details regarding the adoption of permanent dining permits as well as enforcement. It is essential that the County is communicative with restaurants as soon as the process and details are announced, especially as the temporary outdoor dining rules sunset on August 15. The Chamber is ready and willing to assist with disseminating information to our member restaurants, and we look forward to continued partnership with Staff on this effort.

Arlington restaurants have relied heavily on revenue from outdoor dining over the past three years, and we hear from many restaurants who have been waiting patiently for the completion of permanent changes would allow them to plan and invest for the future. We encourage the County to develop a process to expedite the permitting of as many of the existing TOSA spaces as feasibly possible. Arlington's local restaurants contribute to the quality of life that we all enjoy, and codifying existing regulations is an easy step to help these businesses thrive.

Thank you very much for your consideration of our 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: Vice-Chair Libby Garvey, Members Matt de Ferranti, Katie Cristol, and Takis Karantonis, Arlington County Board; County Manager Mark Schwartz; CPHD Director Claude Williamson; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli, Principal Planner Brett Wallace.