



Responses to Arlington County 2024 General Assembly Priorities

Each year, in addition to developing its own legislative priorities for the General Assembly session, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce also takes positions, where appropriate, on legislative proposals made by the Arlington County Board and School Board.

The Chamber does not make a response to every policy position; generally, it only comments on issues that substantially affect budget or public-policy matters related to the business community and economic development.

As with its own legislative policy positions, the Chamber's policy responses emanate from the Government Affairs and Economic Development Committee, which forwards its recommendations to the Chamber's Board of Directors for final approval.

Below please find selected County Board and School Board policy statements and legislative requests, and the Chamber's responses to them:

Human Services

Staffing Standards and Licensure Requirements **County Board Position:** Improve Long-Term Care standards by providing living wages, paid sick days, overtime pay, and training for workers, as well as funding to meet state and national staffing standards for Ombudsman staff to-patient ratios. Streamline healthcare workers ability to obtain licensure in Virginia when they are already licensed in other states. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Child Care **County Board Position:** Increase funding for the state's childcare subsidy program and direct the Virginia Department of Education to enact program changes that increase participation of child care providers. These changes include, but are not limited to, reducing the administrative burden, and increasing reimbursement rates to account for administrative costs and the actual cost of tuition in a locality. Local flexibility to administer or expand support services for childcare is critical. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

LGBTQ+ Rights **County Board Position:** Protect existing legislation that codifies rights and protections for LGBTQ+ Virginians and support any proposed expansions to those rights. **School Board Position:** supports policies and practices that protect individual rights and protect students and employees from discrimination due to gender expression, gender identity, sexual harassment, and transgender status. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Staffing Standards and Licensure Requirements: **County Board Position:** Improve Long-Term Care standards by providing living wages, paid sick days, overtime pay, and training for workers, as well as funding to meet state and national staffing standards for Ombudsman staff-to patient ratios. Streamline healthcare workers ability to obtain licensure in Virginia when they are already licensed in other states. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Land Use and Housing

Land Use Policies **County Board Position:** Support the authority of local governments to plan, zone, and enforce land use regulations, without restricting local zoning authority or the zoning process. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.



Housing Trust Fund County Board Position: Support a significant increase and a sustainable source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Tenant Rights and Eviction Prevention County Board Position: Expand authority to enforce tenants' rights and provide protection in situations of inadequate health and safety conditions and support increased funding, programming, and a right to counsel to protect our most vulnerable residents in eviction proceedings. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Short Term Rentals County Board Position: Maintain authority at the local level to regulate short term rentals and ensure there are registry rules for enforcement and tax collection purposes. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Finance

Local Taxing Authority County Board Position: Preserve all current local taxing authority, including business license, and machinery and tools tax administration, real estate and rate making authority. Any modifications to local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Sales Tax on Groceries County Board Position: Oppose the exemption of groceries and hygiene products from the local option sales tax unless the General Assembly can establish a viable revenue replacement to local governments. Codify a revenue replacement strategy for education and transportation funding. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Transportation

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Funding County Board Position: Advocate for long-term, sustainable, dedicated state funding and expanded revenue opportunities to meet the growing needs of public transit in our region. It is essential that stakeholders – local, regional, state, and federal, and the public and private sector – work together to ensure that Metro continues to meet transportation and economic development demands and operates with dedicated operating and capital funding in a more predictable structure. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Funding County Board Position: Protect existing NVTA revenues and continue efforts to restore funding diverted in 2018 to secure dedicated funding for the State of Good Repair needs of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Of the \$102 million annually that was diverted in 2018, \$63.5 million has been restored; \$38.5 million still needs to be restored. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding for Regional Transportation to Improve Mobility County Board Position: Ensure the Commonwealth's \$195 million non-general fund investments for new and expanded transportation projects materialize as part of the Amazon HQ2 development. As Amazon brings more than 25,000 jobs to our region, the Commonwealth will support additional Metro entrances at Crystal City and Potomac Yard stations; improvements to U.S. Route 1 in Arlington County; a connection from Crystal City to Reagan National Airport; and a bus route expansion in Pentagon



City, Crystal City and Potomac Yard to improve mobility for our region. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Economic Development

State Funding for Economic Growth Initiatives: **County Board Position:** Bolster local and regional development efforts by maintaining and expanding state funding for economic development policies and programs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Office Market Repositioning: **County Board Position:** Support strategies and programs that aim to reposition vacant and obsolete office buildings into different commercial and residential uses with the goal of revitalizing properties and encouraging new economic activity. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Tourism: **County Board Position:** Promote tourism by funding marketing costs to attract both first-time and repeat visitors to Virginia. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

General Government

Unfunded Mandates **County Board Position:** Oppose any mandates that are not fully funded, including additional administrative burdens on local governments. **Chamber response:** Just as the Chamber opposes unfunded state and local mandates on the private sector, the Chamber supports this position.

Broadband Access **County Board Position:** Promote local flexibility and private sector investments in expanding Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure within residential and commercial buildings to increase affordable and high-quality service and foster provider competition. Prioritize advancing digital equity efforts across the Commonwealth: computer device access, resources for cost-burdened households, and digital skill building, including professional training for cybersecurity and other information technology workforce development activities. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports expanding access to the Internet throughout the Commonwealth.

Electronic Meetings for Public Bodies **County Board Position:** Permanently allow virtual participation for public bodies to meet by electronic means under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Procurement: **County Board Position:** Protect local authority on matters related to procurement such as the open bidding process and the state portal for advertising projects. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Information Technology Security: **County Board Position:** In alignment with industry best practices, establish a standardized baseline for information technology security assessments that localities may adopt to enhance the resilience of cloud-based information systems during a potential breach. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Energy and the Environment

Public/Private Partnerships **County Board Position:** Expand the ability and authority of local jurisdictions to encourage private sector efforts to support and regulate energy efficiency incentive and climate programs, reduce fossil fuel use, promote safety, and shift to renewable



energy. Such measures include, but are not limited to, local and regional green banks, stronger and stretch building energy codes, electric vehicle and solar infrastructure, landscaping equipment, local commercial building efficiency benchmarking, and zero emission transportation options. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Renewable Energy Choice **County Board Position:** Permit individual retail customers the choice to purchase 100% renewable electricity from any licensed competitive supplier of electric energy regardless of whether the incumbent utility also offers it. Purchases can be made individually, as part of a collaborative or alliance, or through local government agencies administering aggregated commercial and residential renewable energy purchases to meet local/regional climate and equity objectives. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Preserving and Expanding Tree Canopy **County Board Position:** Support legislation to provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, reduce energy use, and mitigate urban heat islands and their health effects. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position as an incentive-driven approach but remains wary of mandates to the same effect.

Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) **County Board Position:** Increase SLAF funding to support projects that provide Chesapeake Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) nutrient and sediment reductions required under MS4 permits. Evaluate updating proposal scoring criteria to assign points to projects that also support local stormwater resiliency priorities and needs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Enable Ratepayer Protections: **County Board Position:** Enable greater representation of local government on behalf of community needs and interests in State Corporation Commission (SCC) proceedings to include advocating for prudent and fair rates, cost-benefit tests, reliability and resiliency, and integrated County-utility planning reflecting Community Energy Plan goals. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Education

Teacher Raises **County Board Position:** Support state teacher pay increases without conditions such as local matches, recognizing that Arlington Public Schools annually raises teacher salaries at levels consistent with local revenue and further, funds from local revenue the full salaries and increases of many positions above the state's Standards of Quality- funded positions. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Sales Tax for School Construction **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports extending the Halifax Model of 1% sales tax for school construction and modernization to all school divisions. **Chamber Response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Electronic Meetings for Public Bodies. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports legislation that would support the option for school division advisory bodies to meet electronically. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.