



February 27, 2020

The Honorable Richard Saslaw
Pocahontas Building, Room E602
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Senator Saslaw:

We are writing to you on behalf of the thousands of Northern Virginia businesses we represent to express our concern over a change to the eligibility requirements for Gov. Ralph Northam's G3 program included in the Senate-approved budget.

In the version of the FY2020-2022 budget approved by the Senate on Feb. 20, students must have an income of less than or equal to 200 percent of the federal poverty level in order to qualify for G3 assistance, or \$51,500 for a family of 4. We believe this reduction, from the 400 percent level included in Gov. Northam's proposed budget, would drastically reduce the ability of Northern Virginia residents to take advantage of this incredible opportunity and harm the business community's efforts to address our ongoing and future workforce challenges. Preliminary estimates by Northern Virginia Community College show that more than 8,000 potential NOVA students would be ineligible under the new requirements.

As a representative of Northern Virginia, you understand how the cost of living relates to the household median income of our area. While we boast the highest average incomes in Virginia, we also have the highest cost of living driven by an affordable housing crisis with costs 70 percent higher than the national average. The G3 program's purpose is to get individuals the skills to fill high demand jobs and those individuals who need assistance are not just in the lowest income brackets in Northern Virginia. Across Northern Virginia's largest jurisdictions, more than 86,000 individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 live in households making between 200 and 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

Our region, and our Commonwealth, are facing a job shortage that represents a very real threat to our economic growth. The G3 program provides us with another tool to help develop the talent our businesses need now. Northern Virginia Community College is at the forefront of addressing our workforce development challenge and already produces the most IT graduates of any community college in the country. Lowering the income threshold to 200 percent of the federal poverty level would greatly reduce the effectiveness of G3 in our region while it is our region that is most ready to take advantage of it.

We also have concerns regarding the overall reduction in appropriations for the G3 program in both the House and Senate versions of the budget. However, we believe that appropriations can be increased in future budget years as this program grows and would ask the eligibility requirement be returned to the 400 percent level in order to maximize the potential of G3 for Northern Virginia.

Sincerely,



Julie Coons
President & CEO
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce



Kate Bates
President & CEO
Arlington Chamber of Commerce



Tony Howard
President & CEO
Loudoun Chamber of Commerce



John Boylan
President & CEO
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