



September 25, 2020

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

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce calls upon Arlington County to use a portion of its funding under the CARES Act to purchase rapid saliva tests for COVID-19, and to share those tests (or sell at cost, if possible) with businesses, nonprofits, and other community groups. Rapid testing is essential for smooth functioning of businesses and other important facets of society such as schools. Access to tests will help Arlington businesses to reduce the risk of operation and of community spread of the virus. The government has the ability to make bulk purchases of tests to increase community access.

Increased access to testing is the best way to identify and isolate coronavirus cases to prevent the spread of the virus. Chamber members have shared stories of entire shifts of workers being sidelined for days, or weeks, waiting for test results after coworkers showed symptoms, only later to find out that they tested negative. Rapid testing will reduce the cost of delay, and also make it easier and faster to identify positive cases. Absent a vaccine, these tests offer our entire community the best opportunity for living as productively as possible with the coronavirus while minimizing the risk from COVID-19 disease.

Government has unique resources and economies of scale that it can apply to acquiring these rapid tests for the community. As much as the government has been challenged to acquire tests, it is even harder for small businesses to do so, raising the value of the government using its resources, particularly those targeted for coronavirus relief, such as CARES Act funding. Moreover, purchasing and distributing rapid tests is an investment that the County government can make for improved health outcomes from better medical awareness and tax revenues from reduced business disruption.

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, Christian Dorsey, and Takis Karantonis; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Arlington Economic Director Telly Tucker; Arlington County Director of Public Health Dr. Reuben Varghese