



December 14, 2020

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

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce supports the proposed expansion of Temporary Outdoor Seating Areas (TOSAs) and encourages going further to permit retail uses of TOSAs in public spaces. TOSAs have been among Arlington County government's strongest responses to the challenges brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. Speeding approvals for outdoor seating with social distancing has been a help to Arlington's restaurants. Expanding TOSA locations and including elements for winter use will provide further such support, as would allowing retail uses of community TOSAs.

This winter promises to be particularly challenging for restaurants. Governor Northam has already imposed tighter restrictions on account of rising COVID-19 case numbers. Moreover, many patrons are less willing to dine outdoors in winter unless under a tent, canopy, bubble, or heater. Expanding the locations where TOSAs are permitted and expressly allowing winterization will help mitigate these challenges.

Allowing property owners and community groups to craft community TOSAs for their areas is also a welcome addition. These groups may be able to tap into economies of scale that can support smaller businesses, and these regulations support their ability to assist constituent businesses in appropriate ways. A further application of this principle would be to allow retail use of such community TOSAs. The District of Columbia's Dine Out on 8th streetery, which hosted reservation and table service in BID-organized tents, sometimes not immediately adjacent to the restaurant's primary location, demonstrated the potential for restaurant service in such a setting. The Chamber encourages Arlington County to include such uses in the expansion or resulting administrative regulations.

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; Deputy County Manager Shannon Flanagan-Watson; Claude Williamson and Anthony Fusarelli, Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development; Telly Tucker and Kate Paine, Arlington Economic Development