



2025

POLICY POSITIONS

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Introduction Message

To the Virginia General Assembly, Arlington County Board, Arlington School Board, and government officials,

Arlington remains a world-class community and a premiere location for businesses and residents, but no locality can ever take such success for granted. A strong and vibrant economy underpins opportunity for all Arlingtonians and helps our community address pressing issues such as the historically high commercial vacancy rate, the rising cost of living, driven in part by housing affordability, and inequity.

It is therefore imperative that Arlington build and maintain a positive and welcoming climate for business. The Arlington Chamber of Commerce is pleased to share our public policy priorities for 2025 in furtherance of our mission **to strengthen businesses and the economic environment for those who work, live, and do business in Arlington**. We recommend all these policies and call particular attention to the following top priorities for Arlington’s economic wellbeing:

- **Building and maintaining strong partnerships** between government and the business community with a disposition toward leading with “yes,” an emphasis on treating businesses as customers seeking a service, and proactive engagement on policy with affected businesses.
- **Expanding housing opportunity in Arlington** by reducing policy-driven costs on residential construction, providing incentives to increase the supply of housing for all Arlingtonians, and enacting policies that will remove barriers to housing development.
- **Continuing to prioritize economic development**, taking steps to alleviate Arlington’s all-time high office vacancy rate, as well as supporting small- and medium-sized businesses, and entrepreneurship by members of our community underrepresented in business creation.
- **Sustaining a robust public infrastructure**, focusing on the transit services provided by ART and Metrobus along with Metrorail as key components of Arlington’s travel network.
- **Strengthening our K-12 education and workforce development programs** to provide a base of qualified employees that serves to attract more businesses to locate and grow in Arlington.

The Chamber’s Board of Directors adopted these policy priorities following their development by the Chamber’s Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee. We thank the many Arlington elected officials and senior government staff members who have visited with our Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee and who participated in Chamber events throughout the past year to discuss the issues facing Arlington. Their support and insights assisted our members in preparing this document.

We thank you for your consideration of these proposals and extend to you our best wishes for a productive and prosperous 2025.

Best Regards,



David Kinney
2024 Chair



Steve Cooper
2025 Chair



Kate Bates
President & CEO



Government and Business Climate

A strong partnership between government and the business community with a disposition toward leading with “yes” creates and maintains Arlington and Virginia as a world-class community and Commonwealth, respectively, with exceptional services and amenities for all who work, live, and do business here.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Government Culture – We call on Arlington County to instill an emphasis on business attraction and accommodation throughout its organizational culture, which is necessary for attracting and retaining commercial investment in Arlington. Leading with “yes” in business engagement and interaction would support business attraction and retention efforts. We encourage Arlington County to foster a collaborative dynamic between the public and private sectors in all its activities.

Simpler Regulations – Arlington County should design its regulatory processes to achieve their purposes while minimizing the regulatory and administrative burden they place upon businesses operating in or seeking to invest in Arlington.

Permitting – We urge Arlington County to ensure timely and complete application responses through Permit Arlington. The Chamber commends Arlington County for expanding in-person hours at the Permit Arlington Center. The availability of in-person staff five days a week and throughout business hours is a key part of delivering a service to customers. Maintaining excellent customer service is an ongoing endeavor for any operation, public or private. In-person staff should be equipped to resolve common permitting issues and to deliver effective service, and not simply assist in using computer-based systems. Arlington County should re-examine regulations, policies, and processes on a regular basis to identify procedural chokepoints, and ease regulatory burdens. Additionally, Arlington County should compare its results with neighbors to ensure that its permitting costs and timeframes are competitive with those in the region.

Economic Development Commission – We encourage the County Board to include both the separate viewpoints of Arlington Economic Development (AED) and those of the Arlington County Economic Development Commission (EDC) in its policy and process reviews. The EDC works closely with AED, but its recommendations and viewpoints are its own and should be considered independently. The Chamber further encourages the Economic Development Commission to advise the County Board regularly on the economic impact of policy proposals, and to proactively recommend those actions which it believes will benefit Arlington’s economy.

Economic Impact Analysis – The Chamber supports process revisions to incorporate economic impact analyses into staff reports to the County Board, where appropriate, for decision making purposes. Arlington Economic Development can serve as a resource for preparing these analyses, which should be holistic and include the project’s benefits.

Business Ombudsperson – We urge Arlington County to strengthen the Business Ombudsperson position as a true ombuds role, to be a systematic problem solver and an empowered change agent within the Arlington County government for businesses and commercial interests. The Business Ombudsperson should possess the necessary structural power to be a strong, independent voice for the business community, and not be a spokesperson for the County government to businesses. We request that the Constituent Services Team treat concerns of the business community as equal in status to concerns raised by Arlington residents, and that the Business Ombudsperson’s role exclusively focuses on business and commercial interests.

Engagement with Businesses – We request that Arlington County engage proactively with and to seek the input of affected business sectors from the beginning of policy development processes, which provides the greatest opportunity for recommendations to have the greatest impact. Such engagement would ensure that Arlington County does not bring proposals to the business community only when they are fully formed or are presented for County Board consideration. The Chamber offers its resources as a partner for Arlington County to solicit such input.

Soliciting Public Input – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to pursue open consultative processes and direct engagement with interested groups, including but not limited to, the Chamber’s Government Affairs and Economic Development Committee. We also request that the County be mindful of the need to be timely in its public input process. The Chamber cautions that online feedback gathering is not a substitute for open, consultative processes.

Support for BIDs and Partnerships – Arlington County should continue to embrace partnership with the private sector, including with public-private partnerships like the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and partnerships, to drive economic and community development goals. The role of the BIDs and partnerships should be enhanced, by expanding their authority, resources, and ability to be flexible in anticipating and responding to changing market environments within their district overlays. We encourage Arlington County to source new ideas from partnerships and BIDs, and to give them latitude to determine how best they can contribute to achieving shared goals, rather than trying to press partners to take specific actions for which they may not be well suited.

Public Safety – We urge Arlington County to encourage all stakeholders within the government and business community of Arlington to collaborate on measures and policies that can be practically implemented to promote public safety.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Right to Work – We strongly urge the General Assembly to maintain Virginia’s Right to Work law, which has been one of the key elements that has made the Commonwealth a top destination for business in the United States.

Dillon Rule – We urge the General Assembly to maintain the integrity of the Dillon Rule. Specifically, the Arlington County government should not undertake to coerce businesses, of any size, to provide specific wage levels, benefits, or working conditions, outside of the framework of applicable federal and Virginia law. Moreover, tax and regulatory consistency across jurisdictional boundaries promotes economic growth throughout the Commonwealth.

Regulatory Process – We encourage the General Assembly to simplify the regulatory process by frequently assessing the need for existing regulations, and only imposing new regulations that achieve a specific need or goal for the community without imposing an undue burden.

Implication of Regulations – The Chamber requests that the General Assembly should consider the practical implications of new regulations and incorporate feedback from businesses from the start of the regulatory process about how to minimize disruption and cost in meeting regulatory goals.

Hybrid Public Meetings – The Chamber thanks the General Assembly for expanding the opportunity for virtual and hybrid public meetings by local, regional, and Commonwealth agencies. We urge the General Assembly to continue to expand these rules to permit more virtual and hybrid public meetings, especially for advisory and working commissions which do not have regulatory authority. Hybrid meeting flexibility is particularly impactful for these advisory bodies as they rely on active participation of residents and businesspeople to advise government agencies with insights drawn from a wide range of perspectives.

Economic Development

At a time of a historically high commercial vacancy rate, economic development programs can broaden our economic base and ensure a sustainable commercial office and real estate sector for Arlington and the Commonwealth.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Prioritizing Office Occupancy as a Policy Goal – The Chamber urges Arlington County to promote office occupancy as a Policy Goal to guide County activities, policy making, decision making, and implementation strategies. Arlington’s commercial vacancy rate has increased to a historic high of more than 20%. Property taxes from office buildings comprise nearly 14% of Arlington County’s General Fund revenues, making it an essential source of tax revenue for Arlington County.

Incentivizing Development – The Chamber calls on the County to continue to prioritize economic development for businesses of all sizes, including a focus on competitive incentives, tied to strong benchmarks both to attract and to retain businesses, and support for existing and growing businesses in Arlington. Development incentives are investments in our economic future, and our community realizes the return on these investments through increased employment and tax revenues. The Chamber further urges Arlington County to recognize that economic investment via development is a community benefit, due to the increased commercial tax revenue for the County.

Supporting Regulatory Changes – The Chamber supports efforts from AED and the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD) to make regulatory changes to allow for market-based solutions, specifically the latest phase of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI). The Chamber specifically supports the implementation of an adaptive reuse policy that has broad eligibility to commercial office buildings built by-right, built under Form Based Codes, and built under site plan. And as a compliment to CMRI, we ask that Arlington County further consider the policy recommendations of the EDC’s Commercial Vacancy Working Group and other ideas raised by the Chamber and others in the business community.



Investment in Business Recruitment – We encourage Arlington County to support increased investment in the preservation and expansion of the commercial revenue base through the marketing, business attraction, and business retention efforts of AED. Business recruitment is an investment; money budgeted for business attraction pays for itself for many years in the form of taxes paid by the businesses and employees recruited to Arlington.

Retain Existing Businesses – We encourage Arlington County to promote efforts to retain existing businesses. Retaining existing businesses is as critical as attracting new businesses because both have the same impact on the overall economic and fiscal position of Arlington County.

Business Diversity – Arlington County should encourage AED to take a broad approach in its business attraction and retention efforts to ensure that Arlington’s employer base is as diverse as possible. The Chamber emphasizes the importance of supporting small- and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurship by members of our community who are underrepresented in business creation. Smaller companies have growth potential, providing immediate and continuing returns over time for investments made today.

Innovation Tools – We urge Arlington County to fully utilize tools to help startups grow and foster a culture of innovation in Arlington, such as the Innovation Fund Catalyst Grant Program. We encourage Arlington County to study the tools that other localities utilize and apply the best practices to attract businesses of all sizes and types, and particularly attract retail and service businesses, to Arlington.

Protect Rights – The Chamber supports a business environment that protects the rights of all individuals, regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, or mental or physical abilities or disabilities.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Policy Flexibility – The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to apply policy flexibility and possible direct support for industries and, if necessary, for businesses. We further encourage the General Assembly to meet different businesses' needs through industry-targeted programs, or by allowing flexibility for businesses to apply support in the most effective way for their situations.

Support SWAM Businesses – We urge the General Assembly to expedite and streamline business permitting processes and to revise the definition of Small, Women-owned, and Minority-owned (SWAM) Business to target procurement and other business.

Economic Development Cooperation – The Chamber encourages the General Assembly and Virginia Economic Development Partnership to continue to foster cooperation among local economic development agencies, as appropriate, including through the Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance.

Marketing Virginia – The Chamber supports appropriate increased funding to market Virginia as a business destination.

Business Incentives – The Chamber supports appropriate incentives for businesses of all sizes, knowing that smaller businesses grow when supported. We support maintaining a range of economic development programs to include support both for new businesses and existing businesses that relocate or expand operations in Arlington and Virginia. The Commonwealth Opportunity Fund and the Virginia Economic Development Initiative Grant are both crucial to Arlington being able to reliably attract and grow businesses looking at the Washington, D.C. area into Virginia.

Protect Rights – The Chamber supports a business environment that protects the rights of all individuals, regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, or mental or physical abilities or disabilities.

Locality Preference in Procurement – The Chamber calls on the General Assembly to add flexibility to the Virginia Public Procurement Act to allow the Commonwealth and localities to give preference to Virginia businesses and local businesses in the procurement process.



Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

Growing and maintaining a diverse housing stock is critical for economic development. Businesses, especially those in the service sectors, look for the availability of workforce housing as a factor for location. The provision of housing, at all price points, is thus itself a community benefit.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Increase Housing Supply – We encourage Arlington County to remove barriers to expanding Arlington’s housing supply. These barriers include, but are not limited to, limitations on density, limitations on height, and restrictive zoning. The Chamber supports policies that facilitate the construction of more multifamily housing, of varying sizes, in Arlington. The Chamber further supports both policies aimed at promoting home ownership and policies that create more rental units.

Expanded Housing Options – The Expanded Housing Options (EHO) policy is a tool for allowing for more housing diversity throughout Arlington County, and it can provide people more opportunities to find housing in neighborhoods that had previously been out of reach. As such, the Chamber supports restoring the EHO policy and doing so without the annual limit on the number of permits issued.

Regulatory Burdens – We urge Arlington County to resist adding policies, requirements, and regulatory burdens for housing and to be mindful that regulations not directly tied to housing goals can have the impact of raising the cost of housing construction and unintentionally exacerbating the housing shortage.

Property Owner Incentives – We encourage Arlington County to provide developers and property owners with incentives as the best way to obtain substantial additional units that are affordable to a broad part of the community and to preserve existing housing stock.



Affordable Housing Investment Fund – The Chamber supports dedicated funding for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund and an increase in its budget to a level that will support developers in making a significant reduction to Arlington’s affordable housing shortage.

Affordable Housing Tax Incentives – The Chamber encourages Arlington County officials to consider tax incentives and other solutions for preserving or creating affordable housing at various levels of affordability.

Housing Conservation Districts – The Chamber opposes any further development restrictions and encourages the County to share proposals for the next phase of the Housing Conservation Districts, now framed as the “Multifamily Reinvestment Study,” without further delay, or else withdraw the restrictions adopted in 2017. The Chamber opposed the creation of Housing Conservation Districts in 2017. For seven years, we have been promised a second phase of this study to include incentives for housing development, but it has not moved forward.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Increase Housing Supply – The Chamber supports the General Assembly in efforts to increase the availability of housing. The stock, price, and type of attainable housing varies within the Commonwealth, and a multi-faceted approach will be needed. The Chamber supports a regional approach to housing affordability, focusing resources where needs are greater.

Rent Control – The Chamber recognizes that housing affordability continues to be a challenge but does not believe that legislative or regulatory action limiting a housing provider’s ability to set rents according to market conditions will relieve affordability pressures. Such regulation could be a deterrent to future development that would add affordable units to the available housing stock. The Chamber calls on the General Assembly not to permit local governments to limit residential rents within their jurisdictions.

Regulatory Burdens – We urge the General Assembly to resist adding requirements and regulatory burdens when they are not necessary. The General Assembly should consider the impact of its policies on the cost of residential construction and work to reduce those policy-driven costs.

Virginia Housing Trust Fund – The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to maintain and to increase Virginia Housing Trust Fund investment to help address our region’s pre-existing housing shortage. We support the creation of a dedicated funding stream for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, and an increase in its budget to a level that will provide support to higher cost regions.

Emergency Rental Assistance – The Chamber endorses the creation of a Virginia emergency rental assistance program that would provide one-time assistance to eligible tenants to help them weather a financial emergency and to help ease the transition from long-term federal assistance.

Virginia Housing Vouchers – The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to establish a Virginia housing voucher program to supplement the federal Housing Choice Voucher program (“Section 8”).



Land Use, Zoning, and Planning

Additional commercial and residential density, especially in established and potential bus and rail transit corridors are foundational to Arlington's success as an urban community. Land use policy and regulations should be flexible in their codification to attract commercial and residential development necessary to realize this vibrant vision.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Streamlined Site Plan Process – The Chamber supports a reasonable approach to the site-plan development process, allowing for flexibility, and supports reducing the burden of its planning processes. We support allowing for flexibility and openness to developer proposals and encourage Arlington County to outline its priorities for a site plan at the start of the process.

Appropriate Site Plan Process – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to ensure the design and application of the site planning process should be appropriate for each project, rather than applying the same process to all projects, regardless of size and scope. The Chamber supports efforts to revise the Site Plan Amendment system and allow for more changes to require an Administrative or Minor Site Plan Amendment, as opposed to a Major Amendment.

Adaptive Reuse – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to promote the repositioning of older and obsolete commercial office space through incentives and a more streamlined process. The Chamber requests that Arlington County's adaptive reuse policy extends eligibility to projects initially approved under the Columbia Pike Form Based Code and for projects constructed by right. Such an extension of eligibility would provide the greatest number of property owners with the opportunity to adapt their property to the needs of the market.

Land Swaps – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to recognize land swap deals as a community benefit of equal importance to other community benefits. Arlington County should proactively seek out opportunities to advance the interests of Arlington's residents and businesses on projects run by other jurisdictions.



Community Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD) Funding – We encourage Arlington County to ensure adequate funding and staffing for the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD) to process development applications in a timely manner.

Streamline CPHD Processes – The Chamber encourages CPHD to explore how to make major planning studies, such as Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) studies, less time- and labor-intensive if it is not able to complete them swiftly with current processes.

Special GLUP Studies – The Chamber urges Arlington County to combine the Special GLUP Study and the 4.1 Site Plan process into concurrently running processes. The two-tier Special GLUP process has caused delays for both the applicants and the County. Streamlining the processes would save both time and resources.

Transparency in Community Benefits – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to have clear transparency in determining and calculating community benefits as part of the development process.

Parking Mandates – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to revisit parking mandates that add cost to development, interfere with the market, and perversely encourage people to drive when they might choose other modes of transportation. In particular, the Chamber requests that Arlington County eliminate mandates for a specific amount of parking for buildings within 1,000 feet of a Metrorail station, not just the uses specifically listed in Section 14.3.6 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Signage Flexibility – The Chamber urges Arlington County to prioritize an overall reform to increase signage and to evaluate signage for areas across the community. We additionally urge Arlington County to streamline its signage regulations for greater flexibility and to be less of a burden on Arlington’s businesses.

Public Art – The Chamber supports the broad goals of the Public Art Master Plan.

Eminent Domain – The Chamber strongly condemns the use or threat of eminent domain against Arlington property owners.

Zoning Regulations to Support Child Care – The Chamber supports regulatory and zoning changes to incentivize child care facilities in Arlington. These changes include allowing for bonus density in exchange for the provision of child care facilities or services, excluding the child care facility space in eligible buildings from the Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and allowing day care or child care as a permitted use in the S-D Special Development zoning district, alongside schools, hospitals and senior housing.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Limitations of Land Use Processes – The Chamber opposes using site plans and other land use processes as tools for regulating other policy areas, such as labor relations.

Prevent Overreach – The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to serve as a backstop and a safeguard against legislative overreach by local governments in their exercise of eminent domain authority and effective taking of private property rights through the limitation of development and redevelopment options via targeted downzoning.





Transportation

A robust and reliable transportation infrastructure is crucial to the workforce, economic development, and quality of life in Arlington. Metrorail, in particular, serves as the backbone of Arlington's transportation management program and as a primary driver of economic development in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Multimodal Transit – The Chamber calls on Arlington County to maintain a road network that functions for all users and all modes, including transit, cyclists, riders of shared mobility devices, pedestrians, and automobiles. Mobility across all modes within Arlington is essential for community cohesion and business success.

Bus Service – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to work to ensure the strength of ART, STAR, and Metrobus services and to prioritize enhancements that will provide reliable service for riders.

Expanding Transit Corridors – We ask Arlington County to endeavor to secure the funding necessary for improvements to address the current and forecasted need for robust transit services, especially along the Columbia Pike and Langston Boulevard corridors. We request that Arlington County consider transportation equity plans as part of future transportation planning for these corridors.

Rosslyn's Transportation Priorities – The Chamber calls on Arlington County to continue to collaborate with Rosslyn's businesses and residents to advance the Core of Rosslyn Transportation Study's goals and prioritize transportation safety and accessibility near Gateway Park.

National Landing's Transportation Priorities – The Chamber calls on Arlington County to continue to work with National Landing's businesses and residents to advance transportation projects in National Landing, such as the completion of the CC2DCA pedestrian bridge, the completion

of the Long Bridge project, and the second Crystal City metro entrance. We call on Arlington County to prioritize transportation safety and accessibility.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Maintaining Revenue Sources – The Chamber asks the General Assembly not to cut transportation revenue sources, such as the gas tax, without ensuring that all lost revenue is replaced.

Mass Transit – The Chamber asks the General Assembly to provide the funding necessary for improvements to address the current and forecasted need for mass-transit services in the Rosslyn/Ballston, National Landing, Columbia Pike, and Langston Boulevard corridors.

DMV Moves Initiative – The Chamber supports the goals of the DMV Moves Initiative but notes the final funding solution must involve all relevant jurisdictions contributing to the sustainable source of revenue.

Infrastructure – The Chamber supports the development and maintenance of aviation, port, and highway facilities.

Airports – The Chamber asks the Commonwealth to take a leading role in working with the District of Columbia and federal infrastructure partners, including the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) and National Park Service, and to be a strong partner in negotiating with the federal government for access to federally controlled sites. The Chamber supports a sustainable and thriving Reagan National Airport that is complemented by Washington Dulles International Airport. We further support leveraging these airport investments to maintain the level of passenger service there and to enhance multi-modal connections at the airport to the region and the Commonwealth.

Infrastructure Improvements – The Chamber hopes to see in the coming years improvements to Memorial Bridge, Amtrak regional service to Crystal City, cross-river MARC/VRE operation, and improvements to Richmond Highway and to the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The Chamber supports the creation of a second tunnel for Metrorail between Rosslyn and the District of Columbia.



Business and Community Infrastructure

Investments to maintain and improve Arlington's public infrastructure are essential to sustain our economic engine and to promote business growth and community well-being.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Aligning Utility Fees with Costs – The Chamber asks that Arlington County align utility fees with the costs incurred by Arlington County, as a means to incentivize private investment in infrastructure.

Extending Utility Permit Durations – The Chamber supports Arlington County extending utility permit durations to allow for better project coordination and collaboration with associated utility work and allow for permit renewals.

Small Cell and Fiber Permitting – We encourage Arlington County to follow through on its streamlined permitting and fee structure for small wireless cells and to approve fiber deployments in a timely manner aligned with partners' expectations and national standards. The Chamber supports Arlington County permitting fiber based on the needs for each project, rather than limiting the footage allowed per application.

Underground Utility Information – We encourage Arlington County to make underground utility information available to applicants via a centralized database to streamline the process of installation and permitting.

Public Internet Authorities – The Chamber opposes establishing public internet authorities, which could limit the ability of private innovators to serve communities throughout Arlington.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Infrastructure Deployment – The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to support the broad deployment of small wireless facilities, fiber deployment, and similar technological infrastructure, and to support strong infrastructure in Virginia.

Public Internet Authorities – The Chamber opposes establishing public internet authorities, which could limit the ability of private innovators to serve communities across the Commonwealth.

Energy and the Environment

A holistic approach to balancing the development and adoption of clean energy sources with the economic needs of our communities is essential for promoting sustainable economic growth for the coming years and decades.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Community Energy Plan – The Chamber supports the broad policy goals of the Community Energy Plan. Arlington County should ensure sufficient flexibility in implementing the Community Energy plan so that it is viable and economically feasible for businesses and residents, including the availability to consumers of a diverse range of energy choices to meet growing energy needs.

Energy and Economic Development – When making energy policy, Arlington County should consider factors such as supply, affordability, reliability, resiliency, equity, the impact on economic development, and the reductions to greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmental Requirements – The Chamber encourages Arlington County to engage stakeholders when increasing any energy or environmental requirements or terms for incentives. We encourage Arlington County to consider the potential impacts of its environmental policies on housing affordability for all residents.

Tree Canopy – The Chamber supports incentive-driven approaches to tree canopy preservation in the land development process and is wary of tree canopy preservation mandates.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Energy and Economic Development – The Chamber recognizes the vital importance of an abundant, affordable energy supply for maintaining and growing Virginia's economy.

Energy Infrastructure – The Chamber supports developing the energy infrastructure essential to meeting the growing energy needs of Arlington and the Commonwealth. The Chamber urges the availability to consumers of a diverse range of energy choices in meeting growing energy needs,



including generation of energy from green sources such as biofuels, hydrogen, solar, and wind.

Energy Efficiency – The Chamber supports statewide energy-efficiency objectives and policies but does not support the delegation of that authority to localities. The cost to customers should be a consideration in setting utility regulations and policy.

Energy Diversity – The Chamber urges the availability to consumers of a diverse range of energy choices in meeting growing energy needs, including generation of energy from green sources such as biofuels, hydrogen, solar, and wind.

Preventing Local Overreach – Localities should not be delegated the authority to regulate energy consumption and usage, either through local building and zoning codes, restrictions on the transferability of interests in real estate, or by compelling private building owners to make proprietary and confidential data regarding building energy usage public.

Retail Renewable Energy – The Chamber opposes legislation requiring incumbent utilities to permit individual retail customers to purchase renewable electricity from any licensed competitive supplier of electric energy regardless of whether the incumbent utility offers it.

Energy Efficiency Incentives – The Chamber supports voluntary, incentive-based programs to measure and achieve shared energy efficiency goals.

Tree Canopy – The Chamber supports incentive-driven approaches to tree canopy preservation in the land development process and is wary of tree canopy preservation mandates.

“All of the Above” Approach – The Chamber believes that energy and environmental policies and goals should be neutral in terms of technology and fuel-type.

Taxes and Fiscal Policy

A rational balance of the tax burden among businesses, residents, and users of services provides for a cohesive, thriving community. Moreover, while taxes pay for critical services, governments that seek first to adopt additional savings and economies of scale before considering any increase in the tax burden ensure that the public resources are well spent.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Fiscal Prioritization – The Chamber strongly requests that the business community be included in fiscal prioritization conversations. The Chamber encourages Arlington County to consider the input of its designated business representative on the Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission (FAAC) and thanks staff from the Department of Management and Finance (DMF) for their regular engagement with the Chamber during the annual budget process.

Tax Competitiveness – In keeping with the emphasis on economic development and expansion, the Chamber encourages Arlington County to compare its tax rates with those in surrounding jurisdictions to discover specific tax rates and impact fees that put Arlington at a competitive disadvantage in attracting and retaining certain segments of the business community. Moreover, the Chamber supports exploring changes in how user fees and business taxes are assessed to lessen the burden on small businesses. The Chamber further encourages Arlington County to be mindful of the tax burden on small businesses in Arlington.

Service Fees – The Chamber believes that service fees, if necessary, should be tied to the services being delivered. Fee increases should align with improved efficiency and a reduction in service response times. Arlington County should not use fees to balance its budget, or use fees to pay for activities that are priorities for the government, but not for the customers being serviced by the departments charging the fees. Moreover, Arlington County should not charge fees for core services that are essential to any well-functioning government, as those are appropriately funded by tax revenues in the General Fund.

Stormwater Utility Fee – Arlington County should take care to apply stormwater utility fees equitably to all users who contribute to the stormwater run-off. The Chamber supports reasonable approaches to help residents, businesses, and nonprofit organizations who bear a particularly acute burden from this fee, but any such support should be broad-based and borne by the entire Arlington community.

Real Estate Tax Surcharge – The Chamber conditionally supports the real estate tax surcharge on commercial real estate to support the development of transportation infrastructure as authorized by the Virginia General Assembly. The Chamber is pleased by Arlington's willingness to provide information on how funds raised through the surcharge have been spent to date. The Chamber continues to believe that revenues from the surcharge on commercial and industrial properties should be directed towards projects that directly affect those businesses subject to the tax.

Board of Equalization – The Chamber commends Arlington County's recognition of the importance of business representation on the Board of Equalization and looks forward to continuing to provide recommendations of members of the business community to serve. The Chamber additionally supports the transfer of the Board of Equalization from the County Assessor's office to the Office of the Commissioner of Revenue, to achieve greater independence from the County Board.



POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Modernizing Tax Structure – The Chamber supports a comprehensive examination and modernization of the Commonwealth’s tax structure that recognizes changes in Virginia’s economy and promotes prosperity and job creation. Reviewing the tax structure is particularly critical considering the recent and ongoing changes to the workplace. The increase in remote work options seen across the past half-decade has the potential to change our approach to economic development and to render commercial real estate taxes, which are the primary funding source for local governments, a dwindling resource.

Tax Competitiveness – The Commonwealth should position itself and its tax structure appropriately to maintain its competitive edge in this new environment. The Chamber believes this policy can be accomplished while maintaining the rational balance of the tax burden in Virginia among businesses, residents, and users of services that has led Virginia to be ranked consistently as one of the top business-friendly states in the nation. The Chamber further encourages the General Assembly to be mindful of the tax burden on small businesses in Arlington.

Real Estate Tax Burden – The Chamber opposes any action to empower localities to set different property tax rates for residential and commercial real estate.

Real Estate Tax Appeals – The Chamber asks the General Assembly to clarify the role of the County Attorney in the real estate tax appeal process, and to establish an independent counsel or empower the Commonwealth’s Attorney to advise the Board of Equalization. Moreover, the existing burden of proof on appeal before a local Board of Equalization or Circuit Court should be sustained at a preponderance of the evidence standard.

Education and Workforce Development

A highly skilled and educated workforce fuels the local economy. A strong K-12 school system and strong post-secondary and trades education are key components in providing a base of qualified employees that serve as a focal point for businesses looking at Arlington.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Regulations to Support Child Care – The Chamber urges Arlington County to continue to reduce the regulatory burdens placed on child care providers, and to ensure that regulations are necessary to ensure child well-being and are not codifications of best practices. Additionally, we encourage Arlington County to work to find new ways to help child care providers navigate the regulatory systems that do exist at the state and county level.

Workforce Development in Schools – The Chamber supports initiatives and programs for Arlington’s school system to align training and educational programs with projected workforce needs. Additionally, we support continuing, collaborative initiatives to provide opportunities for dual-enrollment college credits for all Arlington students as a part of their high school program of studies. We request the expansion of work-based learning programs such as apprenticeships, internships, and experiential learning opportunities.

Workforce Development in the Workplace – The Chamber encourages establishing incentives to motivate employers to develop workplace learning opportunities for high school students to allow school systems to align with the “Profile of a Virginia Graduate.” We further support collaborative initiatives to provide opportunities for adults seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce, including skills training, interview preparation, and child care support to facilitate participation.



Teacher Compensation and Development – The Chamber supports competitive compensation for educators at all levels of the public education spectrum. We support funding for teacher professional development and increased efforts by Virginia’s community colleges and universities to develop and strengthen undergraduate and graduate teacher-preparation programs.

K-12 Funding – The Chamber supports sufficient funding from Arlington County to fund a strong K-12 public education system in Arlington that trains students for success both in postsecondary education and in the workplace.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten – The Chamber supports Arlington Public Schools offering universal, quality pre-Kindergarten.

Regional Workforce Council – The Chamber supports maintaining a Regional Workforce Council dedicated to Arlington and Alexandria, distinct from other regions of Northern Virginia.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Licensure Requirements – The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to ensure that workers with the requisite skills and training are not kept out of jobs by credentials that are onerous to obtain, and that the Commonwealth establish streamlined paths to convert analogous credentials from other states and the United States military to the appropriate Virginia licenses.

Skill Development – The Chamber supports prioritizing basic professional skill development opportunities that should be integrated into school curricula, as these skills are transferable across jobs and industries.

Child Care – The Chamber requests that the Virginia General Assembly increase funding for Virginia’s child care subsidy program.

Collaborative Workforce Development Initiatives – The Chamber supports funding for collaborative initiatives between school divisions and higher education partners, including opportunities for dual enrollment college credits, lab schools, and for the Governor’s STEM Academies and the G3 program. Additionally, we support enhancing partnerships for cyber, computer science, and technology education at public and private universities across the Commonwealth.

K-12 Funding – The Chamber supports sufficient funding from the General Assembly to fund a strong K-12 public education system in Arlington that trains students for success both in postsecondary education and in the workplace.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten – The Chamber supports school districts in Virginia offering universal, quality pre-Kindergarten.

Regional Workforce Council – The Chamber supports maintaining a Regional Workforce Council dedicated to Arlington and Alexandria, distinct from other regions of Northern Virginia.



Hospitality and Tourism

The Hospitality and Tourism sector is still dealing with a labor shortage and supply chain issues lingering from the COVID-19 pandemic, along with an uncertain economic forecast. Hospitality-specific programs continue to have a role in supporting hotels and their workforce through these ongoing challenges.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY:

Supporting the Hotel Industry – The Chamber supports efforts to promote travel to Arlington and support Arlington’s hotel and hospitality sector. Support for the sector, which is still facing the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, is vital for helping our local economy.

Supporting the Restaurant Industry – The Chamber supports efforts to support Arlington’s restaurant sector and efforts to promote the restaurant scene. The restaurant sector has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, inflation, and a labor shortage, but the sector remains vital to the local economy.

POLICY REQUESTS FOR THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Virginia ABC Regulations – The Chamber requests that the General Assembly streamline the Commonwealth’s multitude of ABC laws. The General Assembly took strong steps forward in the last several years, which the Chamber supported, simplifying the process for securing designated outdoor refreshment area licenses and permitting the selling of to-go cocktails. The Chamber supports considering further actions to simplify and to lessen ABC regulations.



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