



March 13, 2019

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

Dear Chair Dorsey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce supports the package of Zoning Ordinance and County Code amendments for Phase I of the Child Care Initiative. Affordable and accessible child care is essential for the wellbeing of Arlington's residents and workforce. The proposed changes are smart approaches to real challenges that have inhibited access and affordability for child care and represent an approach to regulation which we hope Arlington will follow in other areas.

Access to child care is a major driver of affordability for families who live or work in Arlington. According to the County's Risk and Reach study, all of the adults are employed in more than two-thirds of Arlington families with children under five, yet Arlington only has enough child care slots to accommodate about half of its children under five. If families cannot find accessible or affordable child care, they may be unable to remain in Arlington, possibly leaving our workforce if they prefer not to commute. Arlington's existing regulations, many of which exceed Commonwealth requirements or national standards, make it harder to maintain a child care business, raising the cost and limiting the availability of child care services.

The proposed County Code amendments should increase child care availability, and balance community feedback with Commonwealth standards. The proposed changes incorporate Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) standards into Arlington's local child care regulations, except for teacher-to-child ratios, group sizes, and lead teacher qualifications. The Chamber generally supports Arlington following statewide policies to maintain a consistent regulatory regime inside and outside of Arlington. Where the Department of Human Services is not proposing to align with VDSS standards, the proposals before the Board reflect community feedback and should still lead to an increase Arlington's child care availability and affordability.

The proposal will reduce the teacher-to-child ratios and raise maximum group sizes from the current Arlington regulations, immediately increasing the number of available child care slots. Replacing the two-years of college requirement for Lead Teachers with a Child Development Associate credential aligns the qualification requirement with the work and will open up a career advancement path for more child care workers. The proposed changes to the Zoning Code will raise the by-right number of children allowed in family day care homes, permit family day care homes throughout residential (R) and multiple-family (RA) districts, and create more flexibility in the parking requirements for child care uses.

The Chamber commends the work of the interdepartmental team on the Child Care Initiative. Along with taking steps to increase the availability and affordability of child care, this proposal models using regulation to

ensure necessary health and safety, and not to micromanage the operation of child care businesses. As such, we encourage the Board to approve the proposed amendments.

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 Libby Garvey, Katie Cristol, Matt de Ferranti, and Erik Gutshall; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Department of Human Services Director Anita Freeman; Caitlin Hutchison, Department of Human Services; and Kimberly Vacca, CPHD Planning Division