



## 2022 Responses to Arlington County General Assembly Positions

Each year, in addition to developing its own legislative priorities for the General Assembly session, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce also takes positions, where appropriate, on legislative proposals made by the Arlington County Board and School Board.

The Chamber does not make a response to every policy position; generally, it only comments on issues that substantially affect budget or public-policy matters related to the business community and economic development.

As with its own legislative policy positions, the Chamber's policy responses emanate from the Government Affairs and Economic Development Committee, which forwards its recommendations to the Chamber's Board of Directors for final approval.

Below please find selected County Board and School Board policy statements and legislative requests, and the Chamber's responses to them:

### Human Services

Long-Term Care Staffing Standards **County Board Position:** Improve Long-Term Care standards by providing living wages, paid sick days, overtime pay, and training for workers, as well as funding to meet state and national staffing standards for Ombudsman staff to patient ratios. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Child Care **County Board Position:** Increase funding for the state's childcare subsidy program and direct the Virginia Department of Education to enact program changes that increase participation of child care providers. These changes include, but are not limited to, reducing the administrative burden, and increasing reimbursement rates to account for administrative costs and the actual cost of tuition in a locality. Local flexibility to administer or expand support services for childcare is critical. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Recruitment/Retention of Childcare Center Employees **County Board Position:** Support efforts to create an opportunity for child care centers to participate in pooled benefit programs (e.g. retirement and health insurance) to offer benefits that will help recruit and retain child care workers. Support alignment of state agencies to ensure seamless access for providers to the G3 training program. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding for Locality Response to COVID-19 pandemic **County Board Position:** Ensure that local governments have adequate funding to combat the coronavirus, equip essential workers, local businesses, schools, and the general public to keep them safe and free from the coronavirus. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

## Land Use and Housing

Land Use Policies **County Board Position:** Support the authority of local governments to plan, zone, and enforce land use regulations, without restricting local zoning authority or the zoning process. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Tenant Eviction Prevention and Assistance **County Board Position:** Continue funding for the Rental Relief Program (RRP) and the tenant eviction protections passed during the Covid-19 state of emergency. **Chamber response:** The Chamber urges the General Assembly to move beyond temporary procedures adopted to keep Virginians safely housed during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Chamber endorses the creation of a state 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.

Housing Trust Fund **County Board Position:** Support a significant increase and a sustainable source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund. Similarly support increased funding and programming to prevent evictions and to protect our most vulnerable residents. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Tenant Rights Administrative Enforcement **County Board Position:** Continue to support tenants by establishing a new administrative process, similar to the fair housing enforcement process, for tenant rights that shifts the burden of enforcement from residents to the state. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

## Finance

Local Taxing Authority **County Board Position:** Preserve all current local taxing authority, including business license, and machinery and tools tax administration, real estate and rate making authority. Any modifications to local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Communications Sales and Use Tax **County Board Position:** Modernize the communications tax by resetting the rate to the same level as the state sales tax and broaden coverage to include services that have become available since the original law was adopted. Oppose transfers of these revenues to the state general fund for purposes other than those stipulated in the Code of Virginia. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Equal Taxing Authority **County Board Position:** Retain and grant counties the same taxing authority as cities to provide a level playing field among localities. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports preserving all current local taxing authority.

Sales Tax for School Construction **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports extending the Halifax Model of 1% sales tax for school construction and modernization to all school divisions. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

## Transportation

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Funding **County Board Position:** Protect existing transit programs, the new funding included in the 2020 General Assembly Session's Omnibus Transportation Bill, and all other dedicated funding for WMATA, VRE and the Transforming Rail Program. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Funding **County Board Position:** Protect existing NVTA revenues and continue efforts to restore funding diverted in 2018 to secure dedicated funding for the State of Good Repair needs of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Of the \$102 million annually that was diverted in 2018, \$63.5 million has been restored; \$38.5 million still needs to be restored. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding for Regional Transportation to Improve Mobility **County Board Position:** Ensure the Commonwealth's \$195 million non-general fund investments for new and expanded transportation projects materialize as part of the Amazon HQ2 development. As Amazon brings more than 25,000 jobs to our region, the Commonwealth will support additional Metro entrances at Crystal City and Potomac Yard stations; improvements to U.S. Route 1 in Arlington County; a connection from Crystal City to Reagan National Airport; and a bus route expansion in Pentagon City, Crystal City and Potomac Yard to improve mobility for our region. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

## Education

Teacher Raises **County Board Position:** Support state teacher pay increases without conditions such as local matches, recognizing that Arlington Public Schools annually raises teacher salaries at levels consistent with local revenue and further, funds from local revenue the full salaries and increases of many positions above the state's Standards of Quality-funded positions. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports state teacher pay increases without conditions such as local matches. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Support for Distance Learning **County Board Position:** Provide additional resources and legislative authority to enable distance learning for students, both during the COVID-19 pandemic, and afterwards to enable access to classwork, homework and school projects. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Support Service Funding **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the return to the General Assembly's prior practice of funding support services to school divisions based upon local school division practices. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding for Enrollment Loss **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports funding to protect school divisions from enrollment loss. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding for Learning Loss **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports additional funding to address lost learning due to Covid-19. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding Standards of Quality **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the full funding of the Standards of Quality as recommended by the State Board of Education. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

English Learner Staffing **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the implementation of the Board of Education's recommendation to base EL pupil/teacher ratios by English language proficiency of students. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Cost of Competing Factor **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the continued use of the Cost of Competing factor, including the restoration of funds for the inclusion of all support staff, in the reimbursement formula for Planning District Eight. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

## **General Government**

Unfunded Mandates **County Board Position:** Oppose any mandates that are not fully funded, including additional administrative burdens on local governments. **Chamber response:** Just as the Chamber opposes unfunded state and local mandates on the private sector, the Chamber supports this position.

Broadband Access **County Board Position:** Expand access to the Internet to assist with tele-work, tele-medicine, and educational needs as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Continue to promote digital equity across the Commonwealth, including access to substantive data and local flexibility to serve residents, businesses, and the community. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports expanding access to the Internet throughout the Commonwealth, and studying the details of how best to achieve this aim.

Electronic Meetings for Public Bodies **County Board Position:** Permanently allow virtual participation for public bodies to meet by electronic means under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports legislation that would support the option for school division advisory bodies to meet electronically. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Job Order Construction Contracts **County Board Position:** Support the increase of the maximum threshold amount for Job Order Contracts from \$6 million per contract to \$7 million per contract. Support associating the maximum threshold amount for Job Order Contracts to an inflationary index such that the threshold would increase with inflation. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

## **Energy and the Environment**

Public/Private Partnerships **County Board Position:** Engage in public private partnerships to drive innovation in renewable technologies, including but not limited to, green banks, building codes, electric vehicle infrastructure, and local commercial building efficiency benchmarking. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports true public private partnership for innovation, but opposes the delegation of the authority to set energy-efficiency objectives and policies to localities.

Ratepayer Protections **County Board Position:** Continue utility moratorium shut off during the Covid-19 pandemic. Support the SCC's ability to limit administrative fees that utilities can charge for participants in the multi-family shared solar program. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Preserving and Expanding Tree Canopy **County Board Position:** Support legislation to provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, reduce energy use, and mitigate urban heat islands and their health effects. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position as an incentive-driven approach, but remains wary of mandates to the same effect.

Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) **County Board Position:** Increase SLAF funding to support projects that provide Chesapeake Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) nutrient and sediment reductions required under MS4 permits. Evaluate updating proposal scoring criteria to assign points to projects that also support local stormwater resiliency priorities and needs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.