



March 18, 2022

Commissioner Gary Pan
Virginia Department of Labor and Industry
600 East Main Street, Suite 207
Richmond, VA 23219

Safety and Health Codes Board
Virginia Department of Labor and Industry
600 East Main Street, Suite 207
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Commissioner Pan and Members of the Safety and Health Codes Board,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce would like to thank you for considering the revocation of the Permanent Standard for Infectious Disease Prevention of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus That Causes COVID-19. We agree with your proposed finding that there is not a continued need for these standards, and we support revoking them.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for businesses and government alike. Because the health and safety of our workforce and customers has been a top priority of ours, creative solutions were necessary, and all parties worked with the information available at the time to adapt as best they could. Today, with vaccines and boosters readily available, high-quality N95 masks widely available to the general public, and infection rates dropping, the circumstances we face today suggest that it is time for these standards to be revoked.

In recent weeks, the CDC has updated its guidance on how to calculate community transmission levels, focusing more on hospital capacity. Under this new framework, Arlington County is currently in low transmission, which means masks should be optional for most, although still needed for people who have had symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19. However the permanent standard still uses the old CDC framework, which is much more restrictive. This inconsistency causes confusion for businesses who simply want to follow the rules and keep their employees and customers safe.

We know that our members will be able to continue to maintain a safe working environment without these standards in place. We welcome the chance to work with you in the future on guidance to make sure that employers have the resources and tools they need to protect their workers and customers, while supporting flexibility and economic growth.

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