



March 17, 2023

Christian Dorsey
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Dorsey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports Item 31 on the March 18 County Board Agenda: A Request to Advertise Proposed Amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance permitting research spaces, development and laboratory uses, medical or dental laboratories, and audio-visual broadcasting uses. We commend the County for moving forward with the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative and commend Staff for their hard work. The Initiative is a much-needed change that will enable Arlington to attract more businesses that are uncertain about their ability to operate. We are pleased to see that the amendments are on the Consent Agenda, and we hope that the Board adopts the amendments without controversy.

The Request to Advertise is part of a necessary long-term reimagination of the Zoning Ordinance and how Arlington can develop regulations that promote the attraction of new and emerging business sectors. We applaud the County for adopting the first and second phases of the Initiative, and for encouraging continued zoning adaptability as one tool among many to combat the 22.1% commercial vacancy rate, the highest in recent Arlington history.

The Chamber believes that the Zoning Ordinance needs reform, and that unnecessary restrictions on commercial use should be removed to help the economy of the County grow. We also await the additional phases of the Initiative currently being considered. We hope that the Initiative continues to develop modern regulations to better promote the modern Arlington economy. Timely change is therefore needed. It is imperative that the County focuses on long-term solutions for new business models, both through increased adaptability for new uses and expedited timeframes for approval of these new uses. Furthermore, we encourage the County to consider a less prescriptive zoning text, which can be adaptable enough to accommodate future uses not yet foreseen.

We appreciate this step forward, and we encourage continued work beyond the proposed amendments that provides innovative use applicants the certainty and structure they need in a timelier manner.

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: Vice-Chair Libby Garvey, Members Matt de Ferranti, Katie Cristol, and Takis Karantonis, Arlington County Board; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli; Marc McCauley, Arlington Economic Development; Jill Hunger, Arlington County Planning Division.