



January 18, 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 16 on the January 21 County Board Agenda: Proposed Amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance permitting urban university spaces, urban agriculture, animal boarding, artisan beverage facilities, and workshops in commercial and mixed-use districts. 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 proposed amendments are part of a necessary long-term reimagining 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 phase of the Initiative pertaining to micro-fulfillment centers last year, and for encouraging continued zoning adaptability as one tool among many to combat the record high commercial vacancy rate.

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. In the wake of record high commercial vacancy, timely change is 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 that provides innovative use applicants the certainty and structure they need in a more timely 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.