



NOVA Back to Work
Leadership Task Force

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Northern Virginia Chamber
of Commerce

Northern Virginia
Community College

George Mason University

GO Virginia Region 7

Virginia Career Works
Alexandria/Arlington
Region

Northern Virginia Economic
Development Alliance

Arlington Chamber of
Commerce

Dulles Regional Chamber of
Commerce

Loudoun County Chamber of
Commerce

Prince William Chamber of
Commerce

Greater Reston Chamber of
Commerce

April 7, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

We write to you today as the newly formed Northern Virginia Back to Work Leadership Task Force. The organizations we represent all see immense value in the work you and the General Assembly did during the most recent session to invest in our workforce training and education system. It is critical those investments be made as tens of thousands of Virginians now find themselves out of work.

Our organizations each play a critical role in creating, attracting and retaining our world class workforce. Before the economic crisis brought on by the spread of COVID-19, our region was facing a major talent shortage with 25,000 open jobs. Now, our region's service industry workers in particular are facing rapid and widespread job loss. To be able to quickly get retrained and rehired will be critical to getting our economy running again.

There are ways your administration can act now without the need for new funding. For example, previously appropriated funds for **GO Virginia** could be utilized for economic relief if the administrative burden for accessing those funds was lowered. We ask that you consider seeking administrative and legislative changes to GO Virginia policies to permit the use of its funds in this way.

Funding for **FastForward**, Virginia's short-term credentialing program offered at community colleges, needs to be increased now in order to help Virginia in two important ways. First, demand is soaring for its credentialing services. As the crisis persists and unemployment grows, the demand for FastForward will grow as well. Furthermore, Fast Forward provides credentialing for **healthcare workers**. Virginia will likely not be spared from the nationwide shortage of healthcare workers needed to fight COVID-19. Increasing Fast Forward funding now will make a major impact on how Virginia is responding to the crisis.

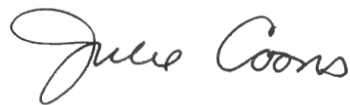
We also ask that you continue to support the following investments in the FY2021-2022 Budget:

1. Initial funding establishing the G3 Program: Your Get a Skill, Get a Job, Give Back program represents a critical opportunity for individuals who experience job loss or reduction during this crisis do get back to work and restart the thriving economy we were so proud of just a few weeks ago.
2. Increase in base operating support for George Mason University: Mason attracts nearly one in four students from across Virginia's community college system seeking a four-year degree and has in-state tuition 24% lower than other doctoral universities, making it one of the most accessible higher education opportunities in the Commonwealth. This base support will help Mason continue to keep tuition and fee increases to a minimum.
3. Full funding for the Tech Talent Investment Program: Virginia is positioned to lead the way out of the crisis with record numbers of computer science graduates. Continued full funding for this program is central to our success.

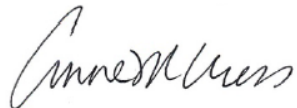
As you continue your work on the next biennial budget, please focus on the conference report approved on March 12 which reflects the hard work of business and education leaders during the General Assembly session. The budget represents a good compromise of our Commonwealth's priorities and should be the starting point for any changes made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for all you have done to listen to the business community during this unprecedented health and economic crisis. We look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead. Together, we can put Virginians Back to Work.

Sincerely,



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Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce



Anne Kress
President
Northern Virginia Community College



Anne Holton
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Chair
GO Virginia Region 7



David Remick
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Alexandria/Arlington Region



Stephanie Landrum
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Kate Bates
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Tony Howard
President and CEO
Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce



Debbie Jones
President and CEO
Prince William Chamber of Commerce



Charles Kapur
President and CEO
Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce

CC: Del. Luke Torian, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
Sen. Janet Howell, Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
Dr. Megan Healy, Chief Workforce Development Officer, Office of the Governor