Dear Northern Virginia Representative:

We write to you today as the newly formed Northern Virginia Back to Work Leadership Task Force. Our organizations each play a critical role in creating, attracting and retaining our world class workforce.

We applaud your efforts in the multiple rounds of legislation to help our country navigate uncharted territory during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the investments these bills have made in higher education, the workforce, and direct support for small and large businesses affected by the crisis.

We understand that the fourth round of stimulus is expected to be negotiated over the coming weeks. To that end, we respectfully ask you consider addressing the following priorities:

1. **Support direct aid to higher education as well as K-12.** This support should be provided with maximum flexibility for institutions that remain operating during this crisis. These institutions have dedicated significant resources to new priorities like transitioning to distance learning while at the same time experiencing a severe decline in revenue. They will also need to begin preparing for the summer and fall terms. Higher education is a major employer in Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth and should be considered for inclusion in federal efforts to avert layoffs.
2. Allow maximum flexibility for state and local governments to use CARES Act and future stimulus funding to meet their needs. The COVID-19 crisis will have different effects on state and local budgets. Those leaders need to be able to use federal support to meet their specific needs, not based on one-size, fits-all rules.

3. Support the Virginia Community Colleges’ (VCCS) request to make Pell grants available to individuals pursuing short-term workforce training. For those experiencing job loss as a result of the economic crisis, their ability to quickly get retrained and rehired will be critical to getting our economy running again. Pell grants would provide a useful tool to support those who seek help through local workforce boards.

4. Increase funding for Labor’s WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker program. A substantial infusion of Labor’s WIA Formula funding (40 percent) provided in 2009 by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act provided critical resources for retraining and reemployment to Northern Virginia jobseekers. We know a similar if not larger increase now would provide a necessary lifeline to the tens of thousands of Virginia jobseekers who have lost their job because of the crisis.

5. Increased funding for the deployment of rural broadband in Virginia. Educational institutions and other workforce training providers have been making the transition to distance learning over the past few weeks. It is critical that government support these efforts by ensuring students and job seekers can access these online resources.

The Back to Work Leadership Task Force understands that the impacts of the COVID-19 health and economic crisis will be felt for a long time. Our organizations are engaged on multiple fronts to help prepare our communities for the next phase in recovery as the future becomes clearer. Please continue to work with Back to Work as you look for ways to prepare for the gradual reopening of our economy.

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,

Todd W. Rowley
Chairman, Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce
Market Executive, Old Dominion National Bank
Board Member of NOVA, GO Virginia, Va. Career Works

Anne Kress
President
Northern Virginia Community College

Anne Holton
Interim President
George Mason University

Hon. Tom Rust
Chair
GO Virginia Region 7

Stephanie Landrum
Chair
Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance

Kate Bates
President and CEO
Arlington Chamber of Commerce

[SIGNATURE]

NOVA Back to Work Leadership Task Force
John Boylan
President and CEO
Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce

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