



Responses to Arlington County 2025 General Assembly Priorities

Each year, in addition to developing its own legislative priorities for the General Assembly session, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce also takes positions, where appropriate, on legislative proposals made by the Arlington County Board and School Board.

The Chamber does not make a response to every policy position; it only comments on issues that substantially affect budget or public-policy matters related to the business community and economic development.

As with its own legislative policy positions, the Chamber's policy responses emanate from the Government Affairs and Economic Development Committee, which forwards its recommendations to the Chamber's Board of Directors for final approval.

Below please find selected County Board and School Board policy statements and legislative requests, and the Chamber's responses to them:

Human Services

Staffing Standards **County Board Position:** Improve Long-Term Care standards by providing living wages, paid sick days, overtime pay, and training for workers, as well as funding to meet state and national staffing standards for Ombudsman staff to-patient ratios. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

LGBTQ+ Rights **County Board Position:** Protect existing legislation that codifies rights and protections for LGBTQ+ Virginians. Support any proposed expansions to those rights and reinforce school boards in their efforts to allow LGBTQ+ students freedom of expression. **School Board Position:** Support policies and practices that protect individual rights and protect students and employees from discrimination due to gender expression, gender identity, sexual harassment, and transgender status. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Land Use and Housing

Land Use Policies **County Board Position:** Support the authority of local governments to plan, zone, and enforce land use regulations, without restricting local zoning authority or the zoning process. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Housing Trust Fund **County Board Position:** Support a significant increase and a sustainable source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund. Remove other barriers to build affordable housing. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Tenant Rights and Eviction Prevention **County Board Position:** Expand tenant rights and expand the County's authority to enforce tenants' rights. This includes an increase in the notification window to 60 days for all landlords to notify tenants of a non-renewal for a multi-month lease; providing protection in situations of inadequate health and safety conditions, a right to counsel in eviction proceedings, and a required training for multi-family residential staff



of their responsibilities under the Virginia Rental Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA). **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Finance

Local Taxing Authority **County Board Position:** Preserve all current local taxing authority, including business license, and machinery and tools tax administration, real estate and rate making authority. Any modifications to the local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Sales Tax on Groceries **County Board Position:** Oppose the exemption of groceries and hygiene products from the local option sales tax unless the General Assembly can establish a viable revenue replacement for local governments. Codify a revenue replacement strategy for education and transportation funding. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Real Estate Assessments: **County Board Position:** Protect the use of industry standards to achieve fair market value. Oppose limits to local assessor's ability to assess all properties fairly and equitably within the county. **Chamber Response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Transportation

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Funding **County Board Position:** Advocate for long-term, sustainable, dedicated state funding and expanded revenue opportunities to meet the growing needs of public transit in our region. It is essential that stakeholders – local, regional, state, and federal, and the public and private sector – work together to ensure that Metro continues to meet transportation and economic development demands and operates with dedicated operating and capital funding in a more predictable structure. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Funding **County Board Position:** Protect existing NVTA revenues and continue efforts to restore funding diverted in 2018 to secure dedicated funding for the State of Good Repair needs of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Of the \$102 million annually that was diverted in 2018, \$63.5 million has been restored; \$38.5 million still needs to be restored. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding for Regional Transportation to Improve Mobility **County Board Position:** Ensure the Commonwealth's \$195 million non-general fund investments for new and expanded transportation projects materialize as part of the Amazon HQ2 development. As Amazon brings more than 25,000 jobs to our region, the Commonwealth will support additional Metro entrances at Crystal City and Potomac Yard stations; improvements to U.S. Route 1 in Arlington County; a connection from Crystal City to Reagan National Airport; and a bus route expansion in Pentagon City, Crystal City and Potomac Yard to improve mobility for our region. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Economic Development



State Funding for Economic Growth Initiatives **County Board Position:** Bolster local and regional development efforts by maintaining and expanding state funding for economic development policies and programs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Office Market Repositioning **County Board Position:** Support state strategies and programs that aim to revitalize commercial districts and to convert and develop obsolete office buildings. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Tourism **County Board Position:** Promote tourism by funding marketing costs to attract both first-time and repeat visitors to Virginia. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

General Government

Unfunded Mandates **County Board Position:** Oppose any mandates that are not fully funded, including additional administrative burdens on local governments. **Chamber response:** Just as the Chamber opposes unfunded state and local mandates on the private sector, the Chamber supports this position.

Broadband Access **County Board Position:** Implement a statewide subsidy program to offset internet costs for low-income households (earning up to 60% AMI), ensuring equitable access and bridging the digital divide to enhance participation in educational, employment, and healthcare opportunities. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Electronic Meetings for Public Bodies **County Board Position:** Permanently allow virtual participation for public bodies to meet by electronic means under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Procurement **County Board Position:** Protect local authority on matters related to procurement such as the open bidding process and the state portal for advertising projects. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Energy, Environment and Climate Change

Public/Private Partnerships **County Board Position:** Expand the ability and authority of local jurisdictions to encourage private sector efforts to support and regulate energy efficiency incentive and climate programs, reduce fossil fuel use, promote safety, and shift to renewable energy. Such measures include, but are not limited to, local and regional green banks, stronger and stretch building energy codes, electric vehicle and solar infrastructure, carbon emitting landscaping equipment, local commercial building efficiency benchmarking, and zero emission transportation options. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Renewable Energy Choice **County Board Position:** Permit retail customers the choice to purchase 100% renewable electricity from any licensed competitive supplier of electric energy regardless of whether the incumbent utility also offers it. Purchases can be made individually, as part of a collaborative or alliance, or through local government agencies administering aggregated commercial and residential renewable energy purchases to meet local/regional climate and equity objectives. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.



Conserving and Expanding Tree Canopy **County Board Position:** Support legislation to provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, conservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, lower energy use, and mitigate urban heat islands and their health effects. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position as an incentive-driven approach but remains wary of mandates to the same effect.

Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) **County Board Position:** Increase SLAF funding to support projects that provide Chesapeake Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) nutrient and sediment reductions required under MS4 permits. Evaluate updating proposal scoring criteria to assign points to projects that also support local stormwater resiliency priorities and needs.

Chamber response: The Chamber supports this position.

Education and Youth

Child Care **County Board Position:** Increase public investment to expand the number of publicly funded slots and ensure slots are distributed to localities based on the size of the eligible population; provide up to \$3,000 per teacher who participates in Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5) to incentivize program participation and quality improvement; adjust Ready Region funding to ensure local governments receive sufficient resources for implementation of state requirements, including classroom observations, developing a coordinated enrollment system, and family engagement efforts; and continue to adjust child care subsidies to account for the actual cost of care based on regular, locality and regional market analyses. **Chamber Response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Teacher Raises **County Board Position:** Support state teacher pay increases without conditions such as local matches, recognizing that Arlington Public Schools annually raises teacher salaries at levels consistent with local revenue and further, funds from local revenue the full salaries and increases of many positions above the state's Standards of Quality- funded positions. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Sales Tax for School Construction **School Board Position:** Support extending the Halifax Model of 1% sales tax for school construction and modernization to all school divisions.

Chamber Response: The Chamber opposes this position.

Electronic Meetings for Public Bodies **School Board Position:** Support legislation that would support the option for school division advisory bodies to meet electronically. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Local Composite Index **School Board Position:** Oppose eliminating the 0.5 cap on the Local Composite Index for the Virginia Preschool Initiative. **Chamber Response:** The Chamber supports this position.