



## 2021 Responses to Arlington County General Assembly Positions

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; generally, 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:

### **Increase and preserve critical funding streams for public education, public safety, human services, transportation and other core services**

**County Board Position:** During the COVID-19 Pandemic, provide additional unallocated funding to localities so that it can be spent on the areas of greatest need.

**Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

**County Board Position:** Fully fund K-12 education, including the Standards of Quality and the Cost of Competing factor. Ensure that state funding for Arlington Public Schools reflects pre-Pandemic levels to ensure continuity of instruction. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board believes high-quality public schools are fundamental to keeping our local community and Commonwealth strong. The Board supports increased state funding to support students, staff, and school facility modernization. In addition, the Board requests flexibility to manage resources and set policies at the local level that are in the best interest of the local community. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

**County Board Position:** Protect existing Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVRTA) revenues; restore funding levels that were diverted in 2018 to fund WMATA's capital funding gap; protect Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority capital funding and replace projected revenues that will not materialize due to the COVID-19 virus. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

**County Board Position:** Support a significant increase and a sustainable source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund. Similarly support increased funding and programming to prevent evictions and to protect our most vulnerable residents.

**Chamber response:** The Chamber supports 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 local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Communications Sales and Use Tax **County Board Position:** Modernize the communications tax by resetting the rate to the same level as the state sales tax and broaden coverage to include services that have become available since the original law was adopted. Oppose transfers of these revenues to the state general fund for purposes other than those stipulated in the Code of Virginia. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

## Transportation

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Funding **County Board Position:** Protect existing transit programs, the new funding included in the 2020 General Assembly Session's Omnibus Transportation Bill, and all other dedicated funding for WMATA and VRE and all other dedicated funding for WMATA. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Long Bridge Project **County Board Position:** Support the long-sought expansion of passenger rail across the Long Bridge for more efficient Virginia Railway Express service, and the improvement of all Amtrak and commuter rail from Washington, DC to the south. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Personal Delivery Devices (Robots) **County Board Position:** Monitor these devices, both in Arlington and elsewhere in the Commonwealth, to determine if the statute needs to be revised to accommodate robot deliveries and protect the safety of our residents. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports study of how to make this technology work.

## Education

Support Personnel **County Board Position:** Eliminate the artificial funding cap placed on support positions and restore the inflation factor for non-personal support costs. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the return to the General Assembly's prior practice of funding support services to school divisions based upon local school division practices **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

At-Risk Add-on **County Board Position:** Retain an at-risk add-on that would provide additional funding based on the number of students who meet that criteria. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the restoration of At-Risk Add-On funding, which was approved in 2020 using the Equity Fund Model. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Average Daily Membership and Sales Tax Collections **County Board Position:**

Continue to hold-harmless the funding in Sales Tax distributions to local school divisions and Direct Aid payment amounts based on average daily membership until the impacts of COVID-19 on both sources of funding cease. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the continuation of the Sales Tax Revenue Hold Harmless Funding. The Arlington School Board supports funding to protect school divisions from enrollment loss. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Support for Distance Learning **County Board Position:** Provide additional resources and legislative authority to enable distance learning for students, both during the COVID-19 pandemic, and afterwards to enable access to classwork, homework and school projects. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

English Learner Pupil/Teacher Ratios **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the implementation of the Board of Education's recommendation to base EL pupil/teacher ratios by English language proficiency of students. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Cost of Competing Factor **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports the continued use of the Cost of Competing factor, including the restoration of funds for the inclusion of all support staff, in the reimbursement formula for Planning District Eight. **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:** Expand access to the Internet to assist with tele-work, tele-medicine, and educational needs during an extended health emergency, and beyond for personal prosperity and stability. **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports legislation to provide additional tools for local governments and school boards to finance, build, and operate open access telecommunications networks. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports expanding access to the Internet throughout the Commonwealth, and studying the details of how best to achieve this aim.

Extension of Authority to Hold Electronic Meetings During a Declared Emergency **County Board Position:** Extend the current authority for a public body to meet during an emergency declared by the Governor (relating to the COVID-19 public health pandemic) where meeting in public is impracticable or unsafe so that such public body, including any state, local, regional or regulatory body, or any governing board, may meet by electronic means until the end of the (current public health) emergency has been declared. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Virtual Meetings for Public Bodies **County Board Position:** Support provisions that would permit localities and public bodies to set their own rules regarding virtual participation. **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.

Legal Assistance Information to Accompany Eviction Notifications **County Board Position:** Require eviction notices (five days' notice for payment issues and 21/30 notices terminating rental agreement in 30 days if the issue is not remedied in 21 days) to include contact information for legal assistance helplines and organizations. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

## **Energy and the Environment**

### **Energy**

Renewable Energy Purchase from Any Incumbent Electric Utility **County Board Position:** Permit individual retail customers to purchase 100% renewable electricity from any licensed competitive supplier of electric energy regardless of whether the incumbent utility offers it also. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Benchmarking **County Board Position:** Authorize localities to require commercial buildings 50,000 square feet and larger to disclose annual energy usage to the locality via Portfolio. **Chamber Response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

### **Environment**

Establish Virginia Bank for Energy and Resilience **County Board Position:** Direct the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) to create an "Energy and Resiliency Bank" using public and private funds to serve as a catalyst for innovation and implementation of advanced energy efficiency practices, renewable energy deployment, increased resiliency, and other environmental programming throughout the Commonwealth. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports study of this concept.

Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) **County Board Position:** Increase SLAF funding to at least \$50 million annually 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.

Preserving Trees **County Board Position:** Support legislation to provide greater incentives for tree canopy preservation and planting in the context of compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and related environmental laws. Tree preservation legislation should provide local governments with greater flexibility in the reforestation, conservation, preservation, and management of urban forests to include incentives to developers to maximize tree preservation and planting to offset tree removal. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position as an incentive-driven approach, but remains wary of mandates to the same effect.

Polystyrene Food-Service Containers **County Board Position:** Enact authority for local option to develop incentives or regulations to decrease or otherwise regulate the distribution, sale or offer of polystyrene food-service containers. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports incentives, but opposes regulations or prohibitions to reduce the use of polystyrene food containers.

## **Human Services**

Long-Term Care 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.

Child Care **County Board Position:** Increase funding for the state's child care subsidy program and direct the Virginia Department of Social Services to enact program changes that increase participation of child care providers (e.g., reduce the administrative burden on participating providers) and increase participation of families (e.g., eliminate child support requirements). Provide safe and affordable access to childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow local businesses to resume operations and our local economy to recover. Local flexibility to administer or expand support services for childcare is critical. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Funding for Locality Response to COVID-19 pandemic **County Board Position:** Ensure that local governments have adequate funding to combat the coronavirus, equip essential workers, local businesses, schools and the general public to keep them safe and free from the coronavirus. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.