



Responses to Arlington County 2023 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; 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:

County Board

Human Services

Staffing Standards and Licensure Requirements **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. Streamline healthcare workers ability to obtain licensure in Virginia when they are already licenses in other states. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Child Care **County Board Position:** Increase funding for the state's childcare subsidy program and direct the Virginia Department of Education to enact program changes that increase participation of child care providers. These changes include, but are not limited to, reducing the administrative burden, and increasing reimbursement rates to account for administrative costs and the actual cost of tuition in a locality. Local flexibility to administer or expand support services for childcare is critical. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

LGBTQ+ Rights **County Board Position:** Protect existing legislation that codifies rights and protections for LGBTQ+ Virginians and support any proposed expansions to those rights. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports the broad framework of this proposal.

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. Similarly support increased funding and programming to prevent evictions and to protect our most vulnerable residents. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Tenant Rights and Eviction Prevention **County Board Position:** Continue to support tenants' rights that shifts the burden of enforcement from residents to the state and support increased



funding and programming to prevent evictions to protect our most vulnerable residents.

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 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.

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 to local governments. Codify a revenue replacement strategy for education and transportation funding. **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, VRE and the Transforming Rail Program. **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.

Education

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.

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. Continue to promote digital equity across the Commonwealth, including access to substantive data and local flexibility to serve residents, businesses, and the community. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports expanding access to the Internet throughout the Commonwealth.

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.

Job Order Construction Contracts **County Board Position:** Support the increase of the individual task assignment amount for Job Order Contracts from \$500,000 per contract to \$750,000 per contract. Support associating the maximum threshold amount for Job Order Contracts to an inflationary index such that the threshold would increase with inflation. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Energy and the Environment

Individual Energy Choice **County Board Position:** Permit individual 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.

Preserving and Expanding Tree Canopy **County Board Position:** Support legislation to provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, reduce 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.

School Board

Student Rights **School Board Position:** Supports the continuation of previously adopted policy and practice respecting individual rights and protecting students from discrimination due to



gender expression, gender identity, sexual harassment, and transgender status. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports the broad framework of this proposal.

Funding Standards of Quality **School Board Position:** Supports the full funding of the Standards of Quality as recommended by the State Board of Education. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

English Learner Staffing **School Board Position:** 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.

Support Services Funding **School Board Position:** 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.

Cost of Competing Factor **School Board Position:** 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.

Sales Tax for School Construction **School Board Position:** The Arlington School Board supports 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:** The Arlington School Board supports legislation that would support the option for school division advisory bodies to meet electronically. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.