

# 2023 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



**NORTHERN  
VIRGINIA**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
*The Voice of Business in Northern Virginia®*

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Julie Coons  
Chamber President & CEO



Matt McQueen  
Chamber Board Chairman

# Dear Chamber Member,



I am pleased to present the 2023 Legislative Agenda of the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce. For almost 100 years, the Chamber has been recognized as The Voice of Business in Northern Virginia™.

This document was prepared by the Chamber's Policy Committee, chaired by Maria Harris Tildon of John Hopkins University. The process was collaborative and included many Chamber members from a variety of industries, expertise, and perspectives. Together with the Chamber's Government Relations team, the Committee met seven times to formulate our policy objectives.

This Legislative Agenda reflects the priorities of the Chamber for the upcoming General Assembly session. It contains several pro-business policies that will be familiar from prior years. It has also been updated to reflect policy evolution. In addition, you'll notice an additional priority under our health care section. We are encouraging investment in providing more equity in healthcare. Of note, the Chamber will be urging legislators to invest in training and recruiting BIPOC doctors in the Commonwealth.

Alternatively, you will notice two new additions to the agenda. This year, we will urge the General Assembly to invest in workforce housing. Furthermore, we have a new section that makes the business case for greater diversity, equity and inclusion.

Our advocacy in Richmond this year will be led by Nick Clemente. He will hold weekly conference calls on Fridays at 8AM starting on January 20th during the General Assembly session. For information and to RSVP for the weekly calls, please email Nick at [nclemente@novachamber.org](mailto:nclemente@novachamber.org).

In conclusion, your Chamber is proud to be your voice in Richmond. Thank you for your time and commitment to advocating for the Chamber membership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Coons".

Julie Coons

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt McQueen".

Matt McQueen





# CHAMBER OFFICERS



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Peraton



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Cooley



### **Immediate Past Chairman**

Luanne Gutermuth  
LSG Solutions



# NOVABIZPAC



NOVABIZPAC's mission is to utilize the resources of the regional business community to ensure the future successes of key business issues.

The NOVABIZPAC relies on the Northern Virginia Chamber's legislative agenda to determine if candidates will be supportive of the priorities of our region's economy.

The Chamber established the Northern Virginia Business Political Action Committee (NOVABIZPAC) in 2002 to support legislators who advocate for business friendly and pro-growth policies. Our PAC is administered by a Board of Trustees composed of Chamber members. NOVABIZPAC receives strategic advice and oversight from the Chamber's Board of Directors.



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**Maria Tildon**  
Johns Hopkins University

**Kathy Albrado**  
Helios HR

**Julie Coons**  
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce



# **THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**



The Northern Virginia Chambers Legislative Agenda highlights the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) in public policy. We see the value of DE&I for businesses and have encouraged policy makers to create a more inclusive Virginia.

Research shows investments in providing economic opportunities for BIPOC citizens is an economic driver for local, state and national economies. The Chamber and our members are committed to DE&I and have included it in the 2023 Legislative Agenda. We have made DE&I central to our organization. Our current strategic plan includes specific and measurable goals for achieving greater diversity among our Board leadership and through our policy and practice.

### **Key Fact: Greater diversity means greater performance.**

- A 2018 study by W.K. Kellogg Foundation found that by eliminating disparities that limit the economic contributions of minorities can add \$8 trillion to the U.S. GDP by 2050.
- Recent research by McKinsey & Company concluded that “companies with more than 30% women executives were more likely to outperform companies where this ranged from 10% to 30%, and in turn these companies were more likely to outperform those with even fewer women executives.”

## Key Fact: Talent demands real DE&I solutions, not just awareness.

- According to the Champions for Accountability (COA) study, Championing Diversity in Northern Virginia's Leadership, "In 2016-2020, among the 50 most populous metro areas, Northern Virginia had the 13th highest score for representation among white women, 25th for men of color and the 6th highest for women of color." This study was conducted in partnership between the Northern Virginia Chamber, The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, and the Northern Virginia Chamber Foundation.
- The COA study showed, "Northern Virginia has one of the most racially diverse labor pools in the country—for example, using the Gini Simpson Diversity Index, there is a 69 percent chance that a randomly-selected worker in Northern Virginia will identify as a different race-ethnicity than another."
- An analysis by the Harvard Business Review found that lagging progress in organizations with diversity goals is directly attributable to the lack of upward mobility for its current diverse workforce. It noted, an annual McKinsey study that found women and people of color comprise 64% of entry-level roles but only 32% of the executive suite.

## Key Fact: Economic benefits of corporate investments in equality.\*

- Gap Inc. created a talent pipeline with double the average retention rates by providing a skills training course and a 10-week internship program through the This Way Ahead program. Ninety-eight percent of participants are people of color.
- Kaiser Permanente analyzed data and found significant disparities in hypertension rates between Whites and Blacks—it then designed a suite of culturally responsive care strategies that reduced the gap from 6.3 percent to 2.8 percent and significantly reduced operating costs.



- Prudential used its lobbying arm to work with a coalition of organizations to pass legislation that helps small businesses enroll eligible workers in retirement plans, thus increasing access to retirement savings for people of color while creating a new market for Prudential and its industry.

*Source: The Competitive Advantage of Racial Equity.*

## Chamber supports policies to increase equal opportunity.

- Education and Workforce: Ensure the Standards of Learning align with 21st century workforce needs, particularly through dual-enrollment and dual-admissions programs like the NOVA-Mason ADVANCE partnership.
- Transportation: Greater investment in safe, reliable, affordable and equitable mass transit in Northern Virginia will help create more equitable education and employment opportunities.
- Economic Competitiveness: Supports legislation that addresses the gap in state procurement opportunities and promotes the growth of small business, particularly among BIPOC and women-owned businesses.
- Energy: Supports investment in new and existing energy infrastructure projects to ensure we maintain affordable and reliable energy sources.
- Healthcare: Supports efforts to recruit and train BIPOC healthcare providers in the Commonwealth as an effort to combat health disparities.
- Workforce Housing: Supports funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, which supports affordable housing projects.



# EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE





## Northern Virginia is home to almost 40 percent of Virginia's jobs.

Our regional economy is built upon world-class education systems and access to a highly educated workforce. The Northern Virginia Chamber believes the future growth of our economy is dependent on investment in pre-K-12 and higher education. Furthermore, access to early childhood education and childcare and innovation in education will prepare students for careers in our growing economy. In addition, we support increasing access to a quality education for veterans, English learners, and historically disadvantaged people. Lastly, we support a more streamlined, coordinated and demand-driven workforce development ecosystem.

### Priority 1: Align support of and requirements for students with workforce needs.

Beginning with early childhood education through higher education, Virginia needs a cradle-to-grave focus on workforce readiness driven by the demand for talent in the Commonwealth. The Chamber:

- Supports aligning the Standards of Learning with 21st century workforce needs through dual-enrollment and admissions programs like the NOVA-Mason ADVANCE partnership.
- Supports industry leaders' ability to take part in K-12 classroom instruction.
- Supports investment in education for English learners and students with learning disabilities.
- Supports investment in programs that address student learning loss.
- Supports expanding STEM-H and apprenticeship offerings at all levels.

- Supports flexible regulations to fast-track innovation in education delivery.
- Supports increasing the opportunity for licensed professionals from other states to receive reciprocity.
- Supports streamlining the credentialing process for licensed non-US citizens to grow our workforce.
- Supports incentives to increase the pipeline of education professionals.

## Priority 2: Create a more streamlined and demand-driven workforce development system that reaches job seekers.

- The workforce development ecosystem must be founded on collaboration with businesses, academia, workforce boards, regulators and training providers.
  - » Supports growing short-term certification programs such as Fast Forward.
  - » Supports GO Virginia's ability to fund innovative and demand-driven regional workforce development initiatives.
  - » Supports workforce development programs designed to reach veterans, historically disadvantaged people and those seeking new careers.
  - » Supports the expansion and maintenance of our K-12 and higher education facilities.
- Supports consolidation of workforce programs under the Secretary of Labor to cut structural inefficiencies and measure success of each program.

### Priority 3: Recognize barriers to education persist throughout the Commonwealth.

- Students, employees and employers all require reliable, consistent broadband to succeed in today's virtual world.
  - » Supports the Virginia Telecom Initiative to bring broadband to unserved and underserved areas.
- Supports Virginia's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and believes funding of a HBCU satellite campus in Northern Virginia is critical.
- Supports funding in-state students at George Mason University at equal levels as other universities in the Commonwealth.





A photograph of a city skyline at night, featuring several illuminated skyscrapers and a bridge over a body of water. The lights from the buildings and bridge are reflected in the water. The sky is a deep blue. A thick yellow horizontal bar is positioned below the text.

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS CLIMATE**

## The economic recovery and success of the Commonwealth depends on a competitive, inclusive and diverse economy.

This requires a regional approach to economic development, public-private sector collaboration, and support of innovation and research and development.

The Northern Virginia business community supports efforts to reduce racially disparate outcomes of public policies. An equitable Virginia with equal opportunities is more competitive, can attract and maintain a talented and diverse workforce, and more economically sustainable.

### **Priority 1:** Supports regional collaboration between the public, private and non-profit sectors.

- Supports increased funding for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP).
- Supports regional economic strategies for state and local economic development initiatives.
- Supports regional partnerships such as the Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance.
- Supports Go Virginia as a critical economic component, but the program should focus on regional efforts while providing stakeholder flexibility.

## Priority 2: Create a more equitable Virginia.

- Supports policies to provide affordable childcare to prevent parents and guardians from leaving the workforce.
- Supports significant investment for early childhood education, PreK through 12th grade, and higher education.
- Supports efforts advancing women and BIPOC owned businesses.
  - » Supports legislation that addresses the gap in state procurement opportunities and promotes the growth of small business.
- Supports investments to develop the workforce needed to install broadband infrastructure.
- Supports continued statewide reforms to policing and court practices that reduce disparate racial outcomes.

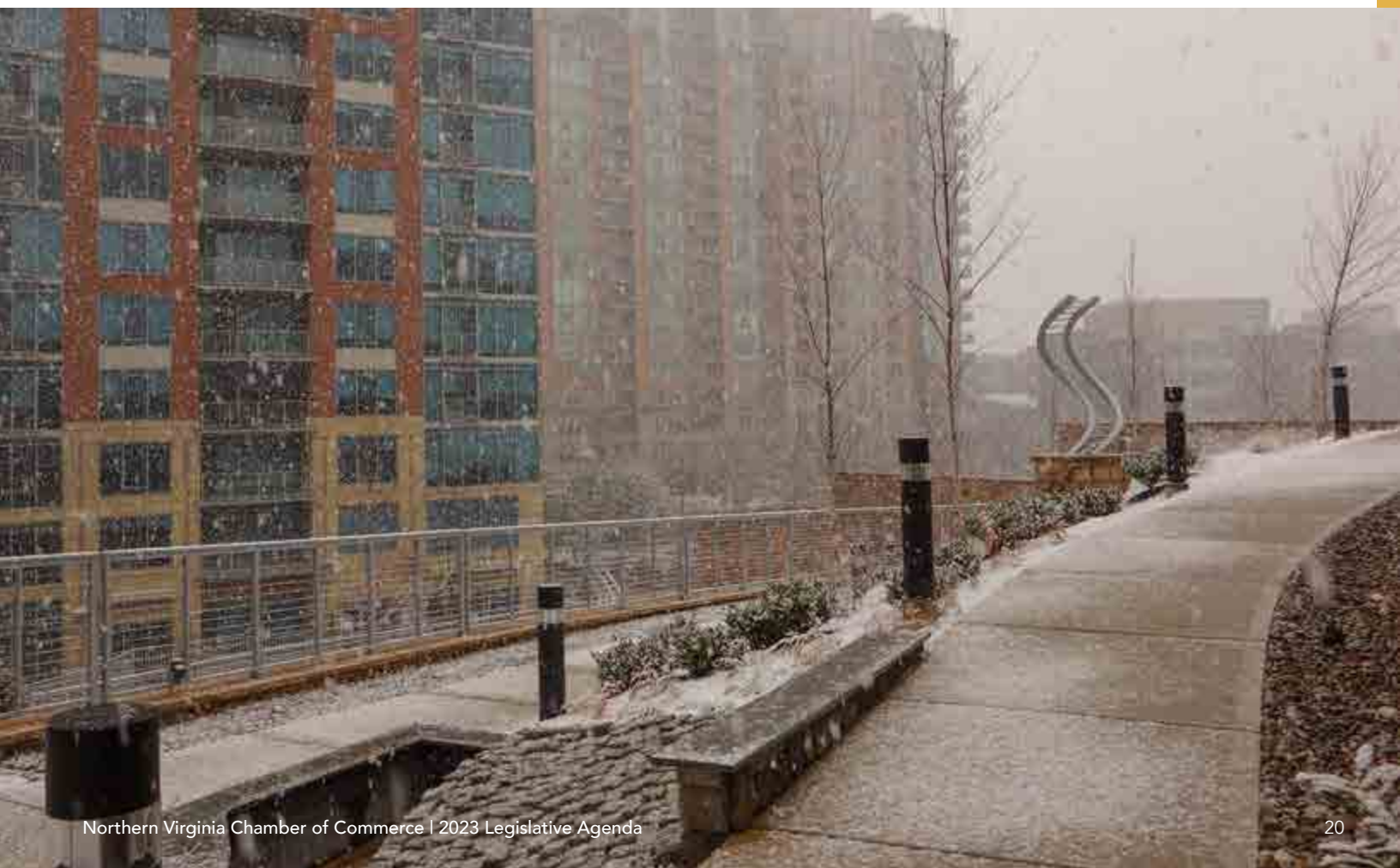
## Priority 3: Supports efforts to diversify our economy.

- Supports economic incentives and performance grants to attract targeted industries to Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth.
- Supports policies that grow our entrepreneurial and innovation economy.
  - » Supports allowing companies to partner with Virginia's higher education institutions to commercialize their research and development.
- Supports the inclusion of public and private institutions in the Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority.



## Priority 4: Maintain policies that support a competitive economy.

- Supports protecting Virginia's status as a right-to-work state.
- Supports additional investment in the Business Ready Sites program.
- Opposes additional programs that are supported by business taxes.
- Supports efforts to repeal Project Labor Agreements.
- Supports targeted state investment in research to capitalize on our advantages in the commercialization of unmanned, autonomous systems and autonomous vehicles industries.







# TAXES AND REGULATIONS



## The Northern Virginia Chamber supports a consistent and fair taxing and regulatory environment.

We believe modernizing the collection and distribution of tax revenue will spur economic prosperity and job creation. Furthermore, we recognize the importance of equitable distribution of burdens across industries and regions will lead to economic recovery and growth.

### **Priority 1:** Supports tax and regulatory policies that make Virginia competitive in the national and global economies.

- Supports comprehensive modernization of the Commonwealth's system for collecting and expending state and local tax revenue to reduce the unequal collection and distribution of tax revenue.
- Supports preserving Virginia's status as a low-tax state for businesses and individuals.
- Encourages the General Assembly to recognize the burden on local governments to raise and spend revenue particularly in high income areas.
  - » As personal income growth of Northern Virginia residents continues to outpace the state, the transfer of tax revenue away from the region undermines the ability of localities to support the growing public infrastructure and service the requirements of our region's economy.
- Opposes single industry taxes that are not supported by the business industry.



- Supports conformity with federal tax rules related to the deductibility of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans as Congress intended.
- Supports conformity to federal tax policies that are intended to spur economic growth.
- Opposes granting taxing authority to local school boards and encourages the General Assembly to fund education.

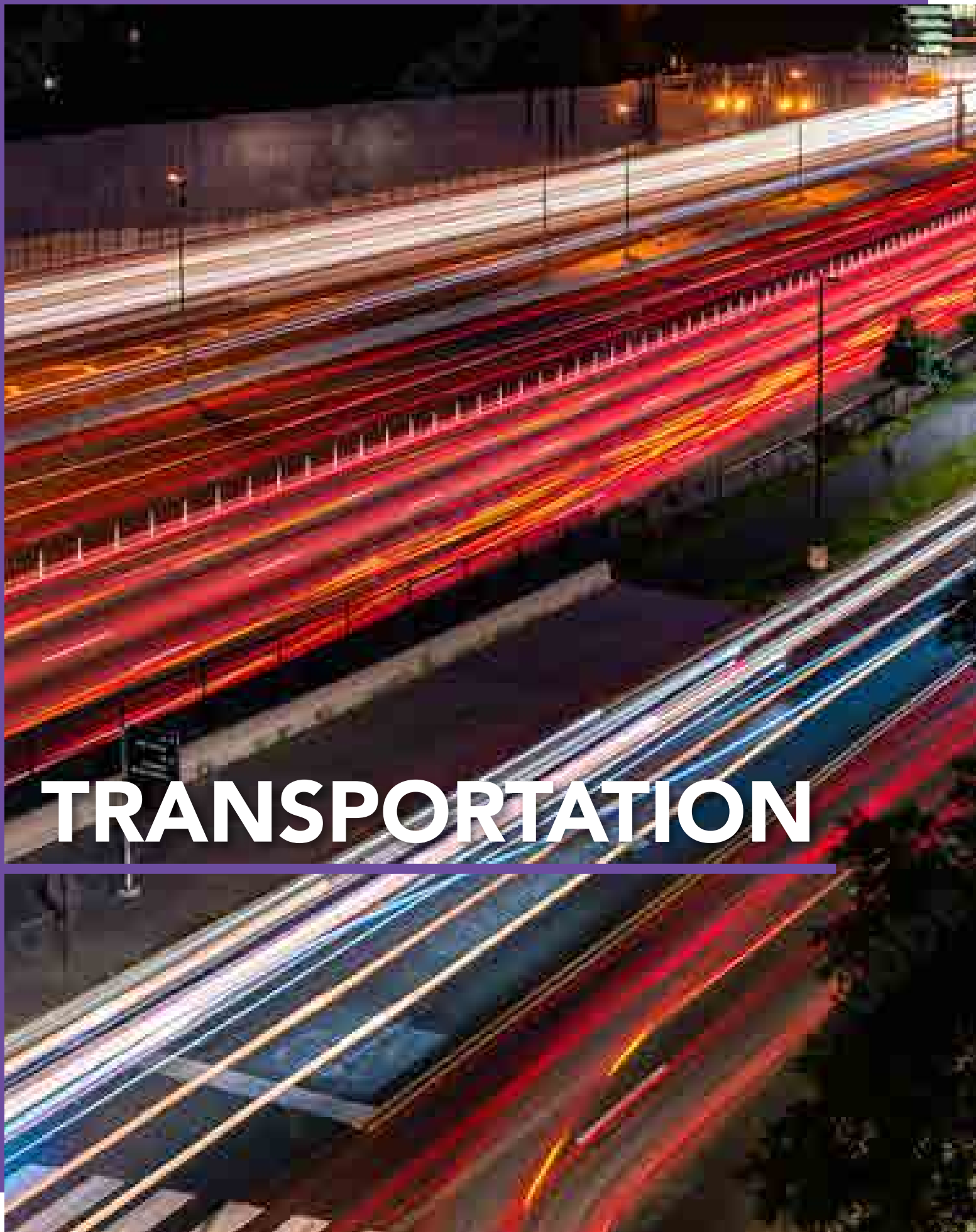
## Priority 2: Supports the Dillon Rule.

- The Dillon Rule is the foundation of a uniform tax and regulatory environment that creates regional economic development and growth.
  - » Opposes efforts to erode or repeal the Dillon Rule to maintain a more predictable business climate across the Commonwealth.
  - » Supports a repeal of localities ability to pass a meals tax without a referendum.
  - » Supports a repeal of localities ability to approve Project Labor Agreements.

## Priority 3: Supports reviewing regulations to determine if current and future regulations are needed.

- As the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, the state's workplace safety regulations should conform to CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and OSHA guidelines.
  - » Businesses must be given the certainty that meeting or exceeding federal guidelines is sufficient.
- Emergency powers granted to the Governor by the Constitution of Virginia should be used to respond to a health crisis and informed by data.
  - » Restriction of the movement of people, and rapid closures of businesses, should only be used if health remedies fail.
  - » The General Assembly should consider its role in future health emergencies.
  - » Opposes any new regulations on home offices.







The Northern Virginia Chamber supports transportation proposals that enhance connectivity, promote economic development and provide congestion relief.

Furthermore, we support performance-based, prioritized and cost-effective regional solutions focused on equitable access. Lastly, we encourage forward looking transportation policy to be compatible with the latest technology advancements and Public-Private Partnerships.

**Priority 1:** Supports local, regional and state funding for transportation projects that spur economic development. These projects need to be future-focused and data-driven to protect taxpayer investments.

- Supports efforts to protect and enhance regional transportation dollars.
- Supports the continued use of VDOT's Smart Scale process that meets Virginia most critical transportation needs using limited tax dollars.
- Opposes efforts to alter the Public-Private Transportation Act's (PPTA) review and selection process or limit the Office of Public Private Partnerships ability to choose projects consistent with state and local transportation plans.
- Supports the continued autonomy of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.
- Supports additional investment in the Virginia Port Authority.

## Priority 2: Supports investment in safe, reliable, equitable, affordable and efficient mass transit projects and service.

- Supports regional collaboration between Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia to ensure Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is efficiently operated, well-governed and fiscally responsible.
- Encourages the General Assembly to work with the Virginia Congressional Delegation to secure federal funding for WMATA and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) operational budgets.
  - » The federal government funds capital improvement projects, but COVID created a loss of revenue which has drastically impacted operational funding. Federal funding should be based on the support WMATA and VRE provide to the federal workforce.
- Supports an integrated regional bus system that serves the entire National Capital Region.
- Continued support for WMATA capital safety and state of good repair projects is critical to the regional economy and service reliability.

## Priority 3: Supports needed transportation infrastructure projects in Northern Virginia.

- Supports the Capital Beltway Accord as a regional approach to improving the American Legion Bridge.
  - » Supports the Northern Extension of the 495 Express Lanes to I-270.
- Supports the completion of the Long Bridge expansion by 2030.
- Supports the Department of Rail and Public Transportation's continued leadership in the Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative to alleviate commuter traffic on I-95.
- Supports the Extension of the 495 Express Lanes across the Wilson Bridge.
- Supports bi-directional Express Lanes on I-95.

- Supports continued investment in Metro's Silver Line and VRE.
- Supports efforts to fund tax incentives to promote electric vehicle usage and the construction of charging stations.
- Supports a new Western Bridge Crossing between Northern Virginia and Montgomery County, MD.

**Priority 4:** The Chamber supports policies that maintain and enhance the aviation industry in our region and support efforts to increase the efficiency and affordability of our airport operations. Transportation policies that increase connectivity to our airports will ensure we're competitive in the global economy by attracting businesses and travelers to our region.

- Supports the efforts of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) to promote the use, accessibility and airport compatible development of Dulles and Ronald Reagan Airports.
- Supports policies that reduce operating costs and regulatory burdens for air carriers at Dulles and Reagan to increase competitiveness for commercial travel.
- Promote modernization of technologies and procedures to advance the aviation system, including air traffic control capabilities, airport infrastructure and policies addressing commercial spaceflight and unmanned aircraft.
- Supports incentivizing R&D and production in sustainable aviation fuel. Enhanced economic incentives for production could spur capital investment, creation of high-tech jobs and research activities, while leveraging Southwest VA's agriculture and forestry resources, as well as municipal waste and hydrogen. Encouraging greater use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in the Commonwealth through a blender's tax credit would help consumers achieve price parity with traditional Jet A fuel.



A close-up, low-angle shot of a solar panel. The panel's surface is a grid of small, square cells, each with a thin, silver-colored line forming a diamond pattern. The cells are a deep blue color. The panel is tilted, and the perspective creates a strong sense of depth and repetition. The word "ENERGY" is overlaid in a bold, white, sans-serif font, positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the image. A solid green horizontal bar is located directly beneath the text.

# ENERGY

The Northern Virginia Chamber supports initiatives that promote a diverse, reliable, efficient, and affordable energy portfolio to support a growing economy, while contributing to the Commonwealth's economic development and environmental goals, along with recognizing the priorities of equity and environmental justice. The Chamber supports the Governor's initiatives for reducing the state's carbon footprint by developing clean energy by unleashing innovation.

**Priority 1:** Supports cost-effective, future-focused and data-driven climate resiliency standards, particularly in land-use, design and energy infrastructure to protect infrastructure investments and promote positive economic development.

- Supports working with Governor Youngkin and the General Assembly to achieve the goals of the Virginia Energy Plan, including affordability, reliability, innovation and environmental stewardship.
- Supports the use of tax credits and design flexibility to make climate resiliency standards affordable and achievable.

## Priority 2: Supports continued and appropriate use of energy sources such as natural gas, nuclear power, renewable energy and cost-effective green building construction.

- Supports investment in new and existing energy infrastructure projects to maintain affordable and reliable energy sources.
- Supports investment in energy affordability to spur economic development and improve quality of life while enhancing energy resiliency and security.
- Supports energy conservation legislation being evaluated on a cost-benefit analysis to ensure the economy has an appropriate amount of energy to operate.
- Supports the use of innovative technologies in energy such as biofuels, hydrogen, solar and wind in the Commonwealth.

## Priority 3: Localities that set local or regional energy and environmental goals above state and federal levels must consider their limited power.

- Opposes the over-application of authority in the service of ambitious energy and environmental goals which have unintended negative consequences for the economy.
- Supports programs, such as Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) that serve as cost-effective incentives to build and maintain a robust energy portfolio which enhances competitiveness in the global marketplace.
- Supports efforts to streamline new energy developments.





# HEALTHCARE

The Northern Virginia Chamber strongly supports efforts to promote a healthy workforce while lowering the costs of healthcare. Virginia is on a more sustainable path through the introduction of new care models, promotion of wellness and new funding that lowers the cost to employers and taxpayers.

We urge the General Assembly and the Administration to continue to engage with the private sector on cost reduction initiatives. Furthermore, we encourage recognition of the investment made by hospitals, health systems, providers and insurers. Lastly, we support efforts in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors to strengthen funding to increase health equity.

**Priority 1:** Supports reforms that increase access to healthcare while lowering costs for consumers and employers.

- Supports efforts to reduce health disparities.
- Supports changes to the existing fee-for-service model to a system that emphasizes greater coordination of care through value-based payments.
- Supports streamlined regulatory processes that increase access to care while preserving quality and lowering costs.

- Supports the continuation of popular COVID-19 medical waivers such as telehealth across state lines.
- Supports reduction in unnecessary medical procedures through initiatives like Smarter Care Virginia.

**Priority 2:** Supports the healthcare industry rebound from a prolonged pandemic; specifically in areas of employee fatigue, burnout and workforce shortage.

- Supports collaboration with industry to identify and address growing gaps in the workforce and barriers to robust care.
- Supports broadening partnerships across sectors to grow the workforce.
- Supports coordination among public health departments and the medical community to establish effective communication channels for disseminating information in emergencies.
- Supports additional funding to expand medical training programs at our health care institutions.

**Priority 3:** Supports maintaining private and non-profit sector delivery and coverage of healthcare.

- We believe the best way to receive adequate and affordable care is through gainful employment and access to the private marketplace.
- Supports robust public programs for individuals between Medicaid-eligibility and private employer-supported health insurance.



## **Priority 4: Supports innovation in delivery of medical and behavioral healthcare services.**

- Supports increasing access to the Commonwealth's behavioral health system.
- Supports policy innovation in behavioral health.
- Supports investment in programs dedicated to serving at-risk populations focusing on early intervention and preventive services and crisis services.
- Supports residential services that allow consumers to choose among competitive community-based behavioral health services.

## **Priority 5: Supports efforts to invest in providing more equity in healthcare services.**

- Supports efforts to recruit and train BIPOC healthcare providers in Virginia to combat health disparities.
- Supports efforts by state and local governments to introduce careers in health care to students in Virginia's underserved rural communities and cities.
- Supports efforts of the Commonwealth's medical schools to fund scholarships for students from underserved communities.

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Alexandria, Virginia, showing a dense cluster of historic brick buildings with red and green roofs. The buildings are situated along a river, with a stone wall and a paved walkway in the foreground. The sky is a soft, hazy blue, and the water reflects the light. The text "WORKFORCE HOUSING" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters, with a green horizontal line underneath it.

# WORKFORCE HOUSING

The Northern Virginia Chamber believes to increase the supply of workforce housing will require legislative reform at the state and local level.

Therefore, we encourage the General Assembly to require localities to model the Fairfax County workforce housing program in their future comprehensive plans. At the local level, we believe zoning ordinances should be updated to allow higher residential density in existing commercial areas with transit. We also advocate for providing density bonuses, parking reductions and tax abatement to developers who provide workforce housing.

### Priority 1: Incentivize the creation of a workforce housing inventory.

- Workforce Housing, as defined by the Urban Land Institute, is: “housing that is affordable to households earning 60 to 120 percent of the area median income.”
  - » Supports the creation of a comprehensive and achievable Regional Housing Master Plan.
  - » Supports funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, which supports affordable housing projects while positively impacting Virginia’s economy.
  - » Supports incentives for developers to build additional density with multi-modal transportation options to increase the overall supply of affordable housing in the region.



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