



March 23, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the 500 members of the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce to first thank you and your administration for your actions to date to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the health, safety and welfare of the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia. We appreciate the fact that your early actions especially took into account the economic impact this pandemic would have.

As you are no doubt well aware, the economic impact of COVID-19 will be felt for months after the last patient is declared free of the virus. While our region is typically more resilient in economic downturns, that will not be the case in 2020. Economic contraction is expected for the remainder of the year, and the service industry has laid off thousands in the first days of the national emergency being declared.

Our members and their employees need action from our representatives in local, state and federal government now to be sure that we are able to rebuild the robust economy Virginia was enjoying only weeks ago. In addition to the positive actions your administration has already taken, we ask that you carry out the following actions to support the business community:

1. Delay enactment of all legislation with a direct impact on the cost of doing business. This would include, but not be limited to, minimum wage increases and industry specific tax increases. Business will struggle to make ends meet with the current cost of doing business and clearly will not be able to cover new legislatively mandated costs.
2. Defer all tax deadlines in line with the federal government. Our members who have kept employees on the payroll during this time need help paying those employees. Further, keeping cash in the economy is critical during this phase of the crisis.
3. Offer support to localities that choose to defer local tax payment deadlines. Those localities that offer deferral of local tax payments may struggle to provide services further down the road. State assistance would help the localities continue to offer critical services to impacted residents when faced with lower tax receipts.
4. Increase the unemployment benefit maximum for laid off workers. The state maximum of \$387 per week is insufficient to meet the needs of impacted workers during this crisis. Please consider raising this amount for those employees who were laid off due to the spread of the virus.
5. Work with the federal government to reimburse private insurance companies for COVID-related business interruption claims. Most insurance providers do not pay business interruption claims due to government-mandated closures or slowdowns, or by a loss of business due to a pandemic. Please work with your federal partners to develop a way to reimburse private insurers who can process claims for their clients who have business interruption insurance.

These are only some of the necessary steps your administration and the General Assembly can take to help the Virginia economy in the short and long term. Federal stimulus efforts like putting money directly in the hands of consumers is positive, but only so long as those consumers are able to spend it on Virginia-based goods and services. Our members need intervention now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Coons". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Coons
President & CEO
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce

CC: Todd Rowley, Chairman, Northern Virginia Chamber Board of Directors