

Realign the Commonwealth: A Safe Return to Business

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Jeff McKay
Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway, Ste. 530
Fairfax, VA 22035

Dear Chairman McKay:

Thank you for your continued engagement with the business community in Northern Virginia during the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. We are writing you today to request you **safely realign the Commonwealth** by allowing Northern Virginia businesses to enter Phase II alongside the rest of the businesses in Virginia under Gov. Northam's *Forward Virginia* plan. We believe it will be safe to do so under strict statewide guidelines and if the current health metrics continue their positive trends.

Local support of the business community, particularly the hard-hit hospitality, restaurant, service and retail industries we represent, will be critical to getting us back on track with the rest of the Commonwealth. As you will recall, Gov. Northam originally pledged a Commonwealth-wide approach to reopening the Virginia economy. In response to health measurements lagging the rest of Virginia, Gov. Northam granted Northern Virginia leaders' request to delay entry into Phase I. Based on data collected during Phase I so far, businesses are able to slowly return to operation in a manner that ensures the safety and wellbeing of employees and customers by limiting community spread.

Statewide health metrics are continuing their positive trend: PPE are in good supply, hospitalizations for COVID patients remain flat, and daily testing continues to increase while the percentage of positive tests continues to decline. We believe the statewide trends, if they hold, show that Gov. Northam's strict guidelines in Phase I are more than sufficient to contain community spread. We are confident Phase II will be as cautious, and Northern Virginia businesses should be allowed to enter it without fear of exacerbating community transmission of COVID-19. This is also supported by the regional data released this week by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, which shows a steady decline in the percentage of positive tests and in hospitalizations, two key metrics in determining the safety of entering subsequent phases of *Forward Virginia*.

Entering Phase II together with our neighboring jurisdictions will be a welcome incremental return to the economic reality of pre-COVID Virginia, which was the best state in the country in which to do business. Keeping Northern Virginia behind the rest of the Commonwealth for potentially months will do unnecessary harm to the economy of Northern Virginia while the rest of Virginia begins to put the pieces of their communities back together. People are already travelling out of Northern Virginia to other localities in Virginia and around the region to take advantage of their businesses being open. Please help us get back to equal footing with our neighbors. Allowing us to enter Phase II sooner also recognizes the sacrifices our businesses have made in order to stay in Phase 0 for these past two weeks while our neighbors slowly opened up.

Simply put, many businesses will not survive if Northern Virginia remains weeks behind for the rest of the *Forward Virginia* plan. You have an opportunity to help families who are under immense financial and personal stress because of losing their jobs by acting now to bring those jobs back. **State and regional trends continuing their positive trajectory combined with strict statewide guidelines create a safe environment for employees and customers.** We are requesting you ask Gov. Northam to allow Northern Virginia to enter into Phase II alongside the rest of the Commonwealth.

Realign the Commonwealth: A Safe Return to Business

Sincerely,

Julie Coons, President and CEO
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce

Eric Terry, President
Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association

Gary M. Cohen, Executive Vice President
Glory Days Grill

Jon Norton, CEO
Great American Restaurants

Mark Carrier, President
B. F. Saul Company Hospitality Group

CC: Members, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Ralph Northam, Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia