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Arlington Chamber of Commerce
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BAE SYSTEMS

Marriott

March 20, 2015

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Dear Arlington County Board Members,

We write to you to express the Chamber's support for additional funding in this year's budget for tourism promotion. In this year's proposed budget County funding for tourism would be down 27% versus last year, going from \$757,000 to \$553,000. Arlington County has been the #1 County in Virginia for tourism impact since 2009. In 2013, Arlington tourism generated more than \$2.8 billion in visitor spending, \$78.4 million in local tax receipts, \$94.8 million in state tax receipts, and \$22 million in lodging tax. Tourism also employed more than 24,000 people in Arlington, with a payroll of nearly \$880 million.

All of the above was achieved with a budget that is well below our neighboring counties. These include Alexandria (\$3.5 million), Fairfax County (\$2.7 million), Loudoun County (\$2.6 million), and Prince William County/Manassas (\$1.2 million). Since the loss of the TOT surcharge, tourism performance measures have fluctuated. In FY 2014, the ACVS team booked 24,000 group nights, drove approximately 57,000 StayArlington website visits, distributed approximately 250,000 maps and guides, and served approximately 4,600 people in person. These efforts are aimed at increasing spending in Arlington hotels, restaurants, retail, and other businesses.

The Chamber will be working hard in Richmond in the 2016 session to reinstate the .25% TOT surcharge, which will stabilize tourism promotion moving forward. However, for this year, we are forced to rely on what we can do within the County's budget. Additional funding beyond what is presented in the draft budget is imperative to keep the transient guests we currently have, add new ones, and attract group bookings at trade shows, all which have a direct impact on the County's tax base.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin Shooshan
Chair

Kate Roche
President & CEO