



Supporting Businesses &
Cultivating Community

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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INTRODUCTION

For generations, The Alexandria Chamber of Commerce has worked alongside civic leaders and stakeholders to help shape the policies that have made Alexandria one of the most dynamic and desirable cities in the region.

To this day, we remain focused on ensuring that Alexandria's business climate is strong, diverse, and sustainable but recent developments at the local, state, and federal levels have brought both new opportunities and pressing questions.

In response, we are proud to present our 2026 Legislative Agenda—a strategic roadmap outlining the key issues that matter most to Alexandria's business community. This document is designed to serve as both a guide for informed advocacy and a framework for advancing our shared priorities in the year ahead and beyond.

As always, we are dedicated to working collaboratively with policymakers and our members to champion thoughtful, forward-looking solutions that will help ensure Alexandria thrives for years to come.

A red trolley with 'TROLLEY' and 'DARTERFRONT' written on its side is moving along a city street. The trolley has large windows and is surrounded by trees and other vehicles. A large, stylized blue '01' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

SECTION 01

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND GROWTH

Our City is a remarkable and vibrant community—recognized globally as a premier tourist destination and place where businesses of all sizes can thrive.

We are home to acclaimed restaurants, dynamic retail districts, award-winning breweries, and a flourishing arts and culture scene. As a hub of innovation, our region's success in attracting Amazon's HQ2 is a testament to our creativity and competitive edge.

These achievements are a source of pride, but continued success requires intentional planning and honest conversations about the future we envision for our City.

To preserve and enhance our economic vitality, we must confront a pressing challenge: the need to grow and diversify our commercial tax base. How do we achieve this goal—and what strategic actions must we take now to secure our City's long-term prosperity?

To start, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce recommends:

- › Collaboration between the Chamber and Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP) to implement AEDP's strategic framework as a result of the City's economic development summit.
- › Developing a short- and long-term strategy for development in Potomac Yard to reflect and continue the heavy investment the City and local businesses have made toward redeveloping that neighborhood as a vibrant, transit-enabled, mixed-use destination.
- › The timely completion of Transformative Development Projects such as Robinson Terminal North, WestEnd [new Inova Hospital], and the former Potomac River Generating Station site.
- › The continued support and cultivation of federal tenants in open office space throughout the City.
- › Proactively monitor changes/shifts at the Federal level and assess their implications for Alexandria, ensuring the City is prepared to respond strategically and adaptively to emerging challenges and opportunities.



SECTION 02

COMPREHENSIVE BUSINESS SUPPORT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

To retain and attract businesses to the City of Alexandria—and to ensure that existing businesses grow, thrive, and remain invested in our community—we seek to advocate for policies that make Alexandria a premier destination where both people and businesses choose to live, work, and prosper. As a result, The Chamber:



Resources and Support

Encourages the City to create a clear and streamlined list of processes and resources available to those looking to start or grow their business in the City.

This includes:

- › Updating the City’s website to help those looking for this information access it directly from the homepage.

- › Continue to support updates and policies that promote administrative efficiency and friendliness when it comes to zoning, business licenses, permitting, etc.
- › Hold small business roundtables and “office hours” to allow for convenient ways for small businesses to suggest best practices, remove barriers to entry, and resolve permitting delays.

The Chamber should be seen as a partner ready to collaborate and work with the City to help implement these suggestions.



Workforce Development

Supports the creation and implementation of a comprehensive Workforce Development Strategy for the City of Alexandria.

A strategy that includes:

- › Preparing the local job force for the jobs that are currently available in the region and that will be coming to Alexandria as a result of major economic development projects. This includes equipping workers with the skills to effectively use emerging technologies like AI, while also recognizing that many roles will not rely on AI and require other forms of training and support.
- › Ensuring all our local schools (from preschool to college) offer career readiness skills and pathways to professions.
- › Focusing on reskilling efforts – especially with the current influx of former federal workers looking for the next step in their careers.
- › Supporting the creation of an Arlington-Alexandria Innovation District to attract and foster tech talent.
- › Engaging the business community on how the Chamber and Alexandria businesses can partner with the City to ensure these suggestions are implemented.



Crime

Believes safe neighborhoods are critical to economic vitality and encourages all stakeholders to work together to understand current crime statistics and learn measures they can implement to keep themselves, their business, their employees, and their customers safe.



Childcare

Recognizes that access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early education is a foundational component of a strong workforce and thriving economy. The Chamber supports sustained and increased

public and private investment in early childhood systems to ensure all families, regardless of income, have equitable access to care. Maintaining and expanding programs—such as grant funding, subsidy enhancements, and mixed-delivery models—is critical to meeting the needs of working families and supporting local economic vitality in communities like Alexandria.



Housing

Supports efforts to increase the supply of housing at all income levels, including making housing attainable for Alexandria’s workforce. Maintaining a range of housing options and price points in the City of Alexandria helps provide opportunity for Alexandria’s workforce, across income levels, to live closer to their place of employment and to participate fully in our community.

Additionally, The Chamber:

- › Supports efforts by the city to increase efficiency in the residential development process through zoning reforms and reducing regulatory barriers for the development and preservation of housing.
- › Recognizes that housing affordability in Alexandria continues to be a challenge but does not believe that legislative or regulatory action limiting a housing provider’s ability to set rents according to market conditions will relieve affordability pressures and could be a deterrent to future development that would add affordable units to the available housing stock.
- › Recognizes that Alexandria has been a leader in converting obsolete office buildings into residential and other uses and encourages the City to continue to be creative and forward thinking when it comes to repurposing space.
- › Recognizes the need to attract private investment for housing creation and encourages avoiding policies that will deter such investment by creating uncertainty around the value and future use of properties.



Transportation

Supports multi-modal solutions that reduce congestion, increase mobility and helps the city reach its sustainability goals. It remains critical that transportation options are available at times workers need them – including nontraditional work hours (nights and weekends).

› **Regional Transportation:** The Chamber supports:

- Providing funding necessary for the continued safe and reliable operation of Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) with appropriate accountability and oversight to ensure the long-term sustainability of our region's primary transit system.
- Completing the planned Regional Express Lanes Network along the Maryland Beltway from the American Legion Bridge to I-270 and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to I-95, the Virginia Beltway from Springfield to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, Virginia I-95 reverse-peak direction, and I-270 to Frederick. All express lanes should be free for HOV and public transit vehicles.
- The continued safe and reliable operation of VRE and local transit agencies in Northern Virginia.
- The expansion of rail service (Amtrak and VRE) to the city, including additional off-peak and weekend trips to allow more options for workers and tourists.
- Promoting public transportation and bike/pedestrian as smart, sustainable options that ease congestion on area roadways, as many workers in the region rely on them to get to and from their places of employment.

› **Local Transportation:** The Chamber understands the importance of efficiently connecting the City from east to west and north to south and encourages the City to use available technology to mitigate congestion on the City's main thoroughfares.



Education

Understands that high quality schools impact choices that families and businesses make to reside and operate a business in Alexandria.

Therefore, the Chamber:

- › Supports a robust K-12 education system that prepares students for work or higher education with strong critical thinking skills and sufficient math, technology and reading skills.
- › Urges more collaboration between the Chamber and Alexandria City Public Schools, School Board, and other relevant stakeholders to leverage opportunities to expose students to varied work and career opportunities.
- › Encourages engagement with the Career Technical Education

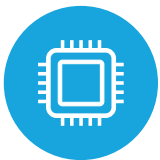
(CTE) program to help connect students with local businesses.

- › Supports the continued offering and growth of broader pathways for students to discover their interests in trade professions and beyond.



Healthcare

In response to substantial changes in health policy at the federal level, the Chamber is particularly sensitive to the downstream impact on employers, providers, patients, and the overall health of our community. The Chamber asks that the Commonwealth invest in strategies to safeguard access to health care and safety net services to protect Virginia's health care ecosystem.



Technology

Believes that the use of emerging technologies related to smart cities can position the City to be a leader of systems that lower costs, improve services, and drive innovation. Allowing for the investment in high-speed broadband fiber and wireless networks will allow these new technologies to be utilized. We particularly support innovative partnerships with the business community.



SECTION 03

KEY ACTION ITEMS

KEY ACTION ITEMS FOR THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Chamber remains ready to partner with the City to enact these policies.

Economic Resilience and Growth

- ❑ Implement parallel, rather than sequential, permit review processes to shorten timelines without compromising review standards.
- ❑ Strengthen the visibility of the Small Business Facilitator at the City.
- ❑ Work collaboratively with the business community to identify opportunities to apply for competitive federal/state grant programs.

Example:

- › Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund (TOPF) & Economic Development Access Program (EDA) – VDOT-administered discretionary funding programs designed to facilitate economic development-related transportation infrastructure improvements. EDA funds design for road access to new and expanding commercial facilities and TOPF funds

construction in the form of grants, loans, or equity contributions. Eligible recipients are confined to local jurisdictions and projects must ultimately be publicly owned, although the work can be performed privately to public standards.

Business Resources/Business Friendliness

- ❑ Make it easier and less cost prohibitive for small businesses and Neighborhood Business Associations to activate public space (which includes more than just parks).
- ❑ Edit public-facing 311 language to better reflect where a request is in the process of being resolved.
- ❑ Continue to simplify zoning requirements to permit more businesses to operate by-right or through an administrative Special Use Permit (SUP) process.
- ❑ Evaluate how business resources and information are shared with potential and existing business owners in the City. Make these resources more readily available from the City's homepage.
- ❑ Use the Chamber to assist in making sure the business community is aware of the services/help offered by City Staff and Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP).
- ❑ Create and provide resources for micro and small creative businesses. These businesses are the heart of the City and provide creative and cultural enrichment to the communities they serve. Ongoing discussion and planning for an Arts District would enable these businesses to thrive and offer more extensive services as well as sustain creative businesses which do not fit the current criteria for existing support and services.
- ❑ Review the City's current boards and commissions to identify overlap and redundancy in scope and mission.
- ❑ Eliminate or combine multiple reviews of major projects by different boards and commissions.

Crime

- ❑ Continue to support a fully staffed and fully funded public safety system in Alexandria.
- ❑ Increase patrols near retail businesses in order to deter retail theft.
- ❑ Create a working group to align theft prevention policies across chain stores and small businesses, address the impact of non-intervention policies, and develop collaborative strategies to reduce retail theft.
- ❑ Encourage the continued open dialogue between the Alexandria Police Department and the business community.
- ❑ Explore best practices in emergency communications networks.

Invest in Workforce Training and Continuing Education Resources

- Support the creation and implementation of a comprehensive Workforce Development Strategy for Alexandria, focused on preparing job seekers for current and future opportunities tied to major economic development projects. This includes expanding career readiness in local schools, investing in reskilling—particularly for former federal workers—supporting emerging technologies like AI, and actively engaging the business community as implementation partners.

Childcare

- Design City regulations for Childcare businesses more in line with State regulations in order to streamline the process particularly when it comes to the co-location of daycares with other businesses.

Technology

- Research smart city technologies that can be utilized by the City to enhance public services, improve public safety communication, solve modern challenges, and reduce costs. Alexandria should be a leader in utilizing smart city technology.
- Implement expedited or streamlined review of zoning and permitting applications that facilitate wireless and fiber deployment.
- Empower next generation connectivity by allowing the use of innovative deployment processes and construction techniques.
- Ensure smart city technologies can be utilized by the City to enhance public services, public safety, solve modern challenges, and reduce costs.
- Recruit technology focused companies to locate in Alexandria.

Transportation

- Support multi-modal transportation projects that will increase the City's connectivity from east to west and north to south.
- Adopt specific policies and initiatives to ensure that vulnerable communities, such as low-income households and persons with disabilities, benefit from and are not burdened by transportation investments.
- Seek solutions to congestion on City roads, including re-examining traffic flow, considering the effect (if any) of closing selected streets to through traffic, limiting use of turn lanes, resetting the timing of traffic lights, and increasing multi-modal connectivity that encourages people to use methods other than automobiles to traverse the city.
- Engage with and receive feedback from any businesses located along a

street that is being considered for changes (traffic pattern updates, lane reductions, etc.). Whether or not a project supports commercial activity should be a metric in the evaluation of a project.

Education

- Urges more collaboration between the Chamber and Alexandria City Public Schools, School Board, and other relevant stakeholders to leverage opportunities to expose students to varied work and career opportunities.

Housing

- Engage the business community in the continued conversations around Alexandria's Housing for All initiative.
- Recognize that housing affordability in Alexandria continues to be a challenge but does not believe that legislative or regulatory action limiting a housing provider's ability to set rents according to market conditions will relieve affordability pressures and could be a deterrent to future development that would add affordable units to the available housing stock.
- Advance policies and initiatives that significantly expand the housing supply, with a focus on affordability, equitable access, homeownership opportunities, and sustainable development.
- Continue supporting and incentivizing the conversion of underutilized commercial office spaces into residential housing.
- Continue strong support for the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) to preserve and grow deeply affordable housing options and enhance community development.

Minority Business Support

- Encourage the creation of a Minority Business Commission to advise the City on how best to allocate available resources and engage as many businesses as possible.
- Streamline internal business certification processes to remove barriers and facilitate business development.
- Advocate for partnerships (Minority- and/or Women-Owned Business Enterprise [MWBE] and Non-MWBE firms) when responding to the government RFPs. The City should consider suggesting MWBE partnerships in its bidding documents. The City should also maintain a database of MWBE looking to partner and/or available to do business

KEY ACTION ITEMS FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Chamber offers the following checklist of action items for the General Assembly.

Economic Resilience & Growth

- Review economic development incentive programs to ensure applicability and equity across the Commonwealth, including Northern Virginia, and across industry/business types.

Examples include:

- › Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) reforms – Site development grant program aimed at increasing the state’s inventory of commercial sites, VBRSP is one of the few programs where both public and private entities are eligible applicants. Eligible sites must be 100+ acres under current law. Proposal: Expand eligibility to smaller sites, potentially specific to certain geographic areas, to appropriately scale site development incentives to urban and suburban jurisdictions.
- › Virginia Economic Development Incentive Grant (VEDIG) – Discretionary grant program with minimum capex, job, and wage thresholds. Funds are not granted until the third year after the investment/job creation is achieved. Proposal: Accelerate timeline for fund availability to catalyze projects in higher-cost jurisdictions; include claw back provisions as necessary to protect taxpayer investment.

Housing

- Support policies that facilitate the creation of more housing units, at all price points, in Alexandria and throughout the Commonwealth, including streamlining approval processes and encouraging zoning reforms to allow for more housing creation.
- Oppose policies that would interfere with the rental housing market, such as allowing localities to regulate rents or lengthen the eviction process for residents who have violated their leases.
- Respect the long-term nature of housing investments by not allowing the addition of new conditions after the end of a previously agreed affordability commitment.
- Establish a Commonwealth rental assistance fund and housing vouchers to supplement, or replace, federal programs like Housing Choice Vouchers to help more Virginia residents afford and remain in their housing.

Workforce Development

- Continue funding for initiatives such as the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program, Virginia Jobs Investment Program, and the G3 community college grant program.
- Support ongoing efforts to align and simplify the state's workforce development programs to improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and maximize impact. Prioritize a demand-driven approach by actively engaging employers in the design and delivery of training programs to ensure they reflect the real-time needs of Virginia's labor market.

Childcare

- Support efforts to address the childcare resource gap and in particular to look at legislative solutions to facilitate the co-location of daycare with businesses to remove any undue barriers that stand in the way of this vital need.
 - › Support funding that covers the true cost of quality childcare year over year.
 - › Provide resources to support early care and education as it relates to workforce participation.

Education

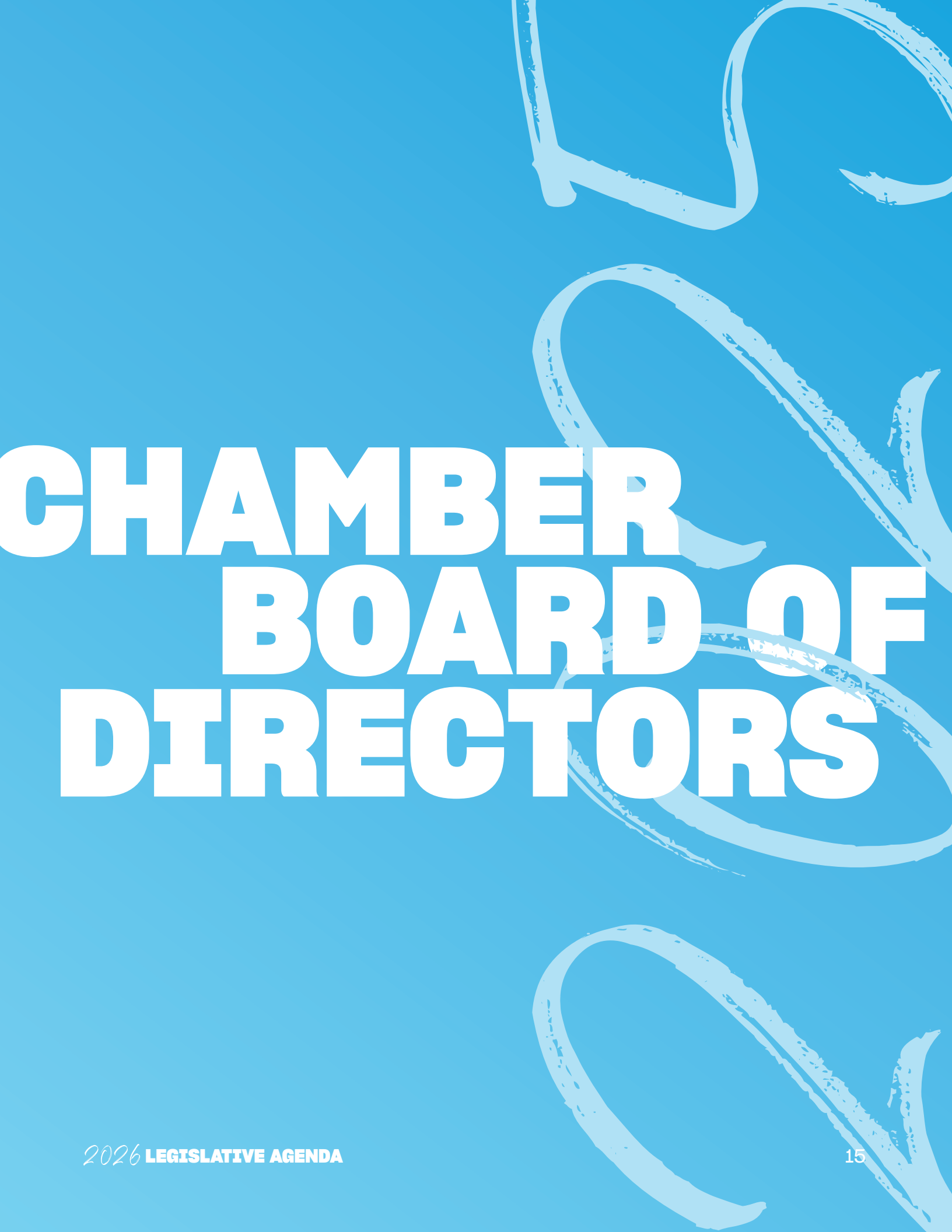
- Prioritize funding for public education so that local school districts can attract and retain educators.
- Consider the standards of quality recommendations from the Board of Education which calls for appropriate funding to address support services (e.g., counselors, social workers) in schools.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Chamber offers the following checklist of action items for the Federal Government.

Transportation

- The Chamber continues to believe the Federal Government and its workforce play a major role in the long-term viability of the WMATA system and has an obligation to contribute funding commensurate with federal workforce usage.
- The Chamber opposes any change to the High Density (slot) and perimeter rules at Reagan National Airport (DCA).

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