



April 19, 2023

Christian Dorsey
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Dorsey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce requests that Arlington County remove Arlington Restaurant Initiative (ARI) accreditation as a mandatory requirement for inclusion in the Clarendon Live Entertainment Group (CLEG) and restore its previous status as an optional initiative. The Chamber strongly supports ARI as a voluntary opportunity for restaurants. However, a member business has expressed concern with us that the change from voluntary to mandatory participation in ARI for CLEG members can open up unintended consequences for participating restaurants. The Chamber is concerned about Arlington County's decision to change an optional program to a mandate and the precedent that it sets.

The Chamber is a strong supporter of collaboration between our businesses and the public safety arms of the County, and we support the goals of ARI: decreasing alcohol-related harm and building positive relationships between owners and managers of establishments and the County. We value the relationship that our member restaurants have enjoyed with ARI, and we are eager for this collaboration to continue.

Last year, the County made these standards a requirement for all restaurants part of the Clarendon Live Entertainment (CLEG). The Chamber believes that the County made this change with the intent of promoting the safety of restaurant patrons and staff, which we take seriously and support efforts to achieve. However, certain ARI standards add additional regulations, such as requirements for kitchen food inspections and fire safety, which has caused some confusion for a member restaurant now that these standards are mandatory but were written as optional policies. While ARI has good intentions, we find that its transformation into a mandate, without consultation or adjustments in standards to reflect that, does not reflect best government practices.

Therefore, we request that the County Board revise the CLEG requirements to return to the previous status of encouraging ARI accreditation, not requiring it for all CLEG members. We value the great work of the ARI team and hope to continue to partner with the County on a solution that supports the program's goals of reducing the harmful effects of nightlife and promoting robust, voluntary, and mutually beneficial collaboration between government and businesses in Arlington. We look forward to continuing this conversation with the relevant County departments and agencies and to collaborating on a solution.

Sincerely,

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

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Vice Chair Libby Garvey; County Board Members Matt de Ferranti, Katie Cristol and Takis Karantonis; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Business Ombudsperson Katelyn Thomas; Resident Ombudsperson Ben Aiken; Nightlife Liaison Samantha Brien; Clarendon Live Entertainment Group Liaison Cedric Southerland.