

EDUCATION

Stem Academy & Education: The Alliance **supports** a line item or per pupil funding support for STEM Academy's student expansion. The Alliance **supports** additional emphasis on coursework focused on business and economics to encourage entrepreneurship and the next generation of small business owners.

Nationally & Globally Competitive Public Education: The Alliance **supports** innovative strategies to ensure our system of public education remains competitive nationally and globally. This includes strengthening connections among students, parents, educators, and guidance counselors of Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities and regionally in-demand careers.

Public/Private Higher Education Congruency: The Alliance **supports** policies in education that do not neglect private institutions of higher learning from receiving similar grant or funding opportunities, such as Laboratory School initiatives.

Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant Program: The Alliance **supports** the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) Program and efforts to maximize the TAG award amount for qualified students at eligible Virginia private colleges or universities.

FastForward Funding: The Alliance **supports** increased funding for Virginia's FastForward short-term training program and funding for childcare/early childhood education.

WORKFORCE

Virginia Workforce Consolidation: The Alliance **supports** the continued transition and funding for the Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (DWDA) to align workforce programs and ensure they are effective economic development tools.

Improve Coordination Between Employers & Education Community: The Alliance **supports** efforts to improve coordination between Virginia's employers, job training programs, education communities, and decision-making bodies to meet industry, workforce, and student needs. The Alliance continues to support investment in job training, education, and in-demand skills that lead to higher earning potential. The Alliance **supports** initiatives that encourage guidance and career counselors to place emphasis on Career Technical Education (CTE) and Apprenticeship opportunities for high school students, on par with guidance on college opportunities.

Recruitment of CTE Instructors: The Alliance **supports** all efforts to recruit fully licensed and credentialed industrial trades experts to teach, train, and mentor the next generation of skilled workers. The Alliance **supports** initiatives that streamline the process to either help experts in their respective fields to gain teaching licensure at the high school level or instructor credentialing through the Virginia Community College System (VCCS).

Affordable Childcare: The Alliance **recognizes** access to quality, affordable child care is essential to our current and future workforce. Without it, parents may leave the workforce, placing additional strain on industries already struggling to recruit and retain talent. We **support** increased state funding to meet demand for child care services for Virginia's working families and legislation to ensure and maximize sustainable, stable funding that is responsive to parent choice.

Recognizing the critical role that child care plays in supporting the workforce and the costs of inaction to Virginia's businesses and economic vitality, the Alliance **supports** innovative alternatives, including public-private partnerships, to ensure that Virginia's labor force of working parents can access affordable quality child care.

Minimum Wage: Recognizing that high inflation, current economic conditions, and competition for talent have compelled employers to keep pace with rising compensation trends, the Alliance **supports** the repeal of outdated minimum wage mandates. The Alliance **opposes** mandates for increasing the minimum wage outright and opposes the failure to adjust increases for economic differences between the regions of the Commonwealth. The market drives growth.

Right-to-Work: The Alliance **opposes** laws or regulations that undermine Virginia's Right to Work status, including Fair Share or any other initiative that compels employees to pay union dues as a requirement of employment.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lynchburg NITCH: The Alliance is **committed** to the growth of its existing industry cluster in the nuclear equipment manufacturing space. The Alliance will make every effort to support state and federal funding sources, work with regional, state, and federally funded nuclear industry initiatives, and leverage all available resource to stand-up the Lynchburg Regional NITCH (Nuclear Industrial Technology Commercialization Hub).

Incentives: The Alliance **supports** incentives to promote business expansion and economic growth. Funding for economic development programs, including the creation of pad-ready sites, available through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, specifically the expansion of the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program, the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program, Major Business Facilities Job Tax Credit, and GO Virginia.

ENERGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Energy Costs: The Alliance **opposes** policies and regulations that increase energy costs for businesses. The Alliance **supports** the continued safe development of cost effective traditional and renewable energy sources to meet the needs of businesses, as well as to support future economic development. The Alliance **supports** the inclusion of commercial nuclear energy production and generation as a part of these efforts.

Broadband: The Alliance **supports** continued implementation of the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) for the expansion of internet access across the region. Furthermore, the Alliance **supports** initiatives that will encourage existing providers to expand their existing service areas to cover unserved or underserved residents that cannot be provided for by VATI funds.

Workforce Housing: The Alliance **recognizes** the continued constraints on housing inventory that are impacting availability and affordability for many in our local region. This also has the added impact on regional competitiveness when attracting and retaining employers and talent. The Alliance **encourages** the creation of more opportunities to increase access to workforce housing at all income levels.

HEALTHCARE

Insurance: The Alliance **opposes** "Medicare for All" programs.

Association Health Plans: The Alliance **supports** the continued implementation of the consortium healthcare plans (WiseChoice) and legislation that expands and enhances Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs).

Mandated Paid Leave Programs: The Alliance continues to **support** businesses voluntarily providing their own employee benefits, that may include Paid Leave Programs instead of a mandated policy by the Commonwealth or Federal Government that increases or creates additional taxes, financial, and regulatory burdens.

Mental Health: The Alliance **supports** funding a comprehensive, multipronged strategy to address the Commonwealth's behavioral health crisis. This would include remedies to relieve law enforcement and community hospitals from long waits in Emergency Departments waiting for state psychiatric beds for Emergency Custody Orders (ECOs) and Temporary Detention Orders (TDOs).

REFORM & TAXATION

Simplification: The Alliance **supports** proposals that simplify the tax code and reduce the cost of compliance on businesses and individuals.

Reduction of Regulations: The Alliance **supports** efforts at the local, state, and federal level to reduce regulations, including continued efforts, through the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, of a 25% reduction in business and workplace regulations. The Alliance **supports** uniformity and consistency in the application of regulations across all DEQ regions.

TRANSPORTATION

Air Service: The Alliance **supports** the continued expansion of air service to the Lynchburg region. The Alliance also **supports** expansion of the Governor's New Airline Service Incentive Fund to provide for greater incentives to assist airlines in marketing and promoting new air service at Virginia commercial service airports, and to amend state code to create a more streamlined approach to utilizing the funds allowing airports to more easily market the fund to prospective airlines.

Rail: The Alliance **supports** expansion of Amtrak passenger rail from Lynchburg to the west, with continued exploration of expansion to Bristol. The Alliance also **supports** the study and initiatives that facilitate the enhancement of rail centric growth and opportunities in the Lynchburg Region.

Surface: The Alliance **supports** continued efforts toward timely implementation of the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan (CIP). The Alliance is **opposed** to any changes to VDOT SMART Scale that negatively impacts parity in funding with Virginia's larger metro areas. Any adjustments to SMART Scale weighting must continue to emphasize safety and future growth of transportation needs in our region.

For more information, contact Barry Butler, Director of Government Relations, at BBButler@LynchburgRegion.org or call W: 434-845-5968 ext. 15 or C: 540-588-2197.

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