

Policy Recommendations



Federal

Support a Phase 5 Federal stimulus bill that includes additional funds and support for businesses, workers, state and local governments, and other organizations

Consider extending and amending the Paycheck Protection Program loans to become grants:

- According to our survey, 70% of businesses that participated say they were able to access grants or loans, if they needed them
- 37% were able to receive a Paycheck Protection Program loan
- 10% are still waiting for their application to be processed
- However, the loans only provide for 8 weeks of operations and some businesses have been forced to stay closed due to government orders
- This creates a challenge to meet the PPP's standards for loan forgiveness when they cannot operate to start paying down the loan
- Support a more streamlined PPP process to support businesses by the SBA and Treasury

Provide states and localities with additional funds to stop-gap funding shortages due to emergency spending on COVID-19 response:

- Additional unemployment insurance (UI) funds to help stabilize states' UI trust funds (Virginia's UI trust fund is set to run out in the third quarter of 2020)
- Extend the assistance time frame to include the hardest hit months of this economic and health event
- Expand the definition of applicable organizations for PPP to 501 C (6) non-profits so they are able to apply for assistance
- Include housing assistance for workers to ensure stability and homelessness prevention in the long-term



Legal and Liability Protections

Provide assurance to employers that they will not be held legally liable for the transmission of the highly contagious COVID-19, as long as they take good faith efforts to limit exposure through government guidelines, social distancing and heightened sanitation standards as suggested by OSHA, CDC, Virginia Department of Health, and Virginia Department of Labor and Industry:

- Provide civil immunity to employers that act in good faith while responding to the outbreak
- Enact liability protections for business owners from allegations by patrons who claim they contracted COVID-19 at a place of business
- Provide employers with a safe harbor for collecting and exchanging critical information related to employees' health status and for implementing reasonable measures such as temperature checks to combat workplace transmission of COVID-19
- Provide Good Samaritan protections to manufacturers and distributors of PPEs from liability for claims arising out of the use of these items absent a showing of gross negligence, willful misconduct, or intentional infliction of harm



Tax and Regulatory

Ease short-term tax burdens to provide flexibility to businesses as they recover:

- Waive interest and penalties for late payment or late filing of taxes (absent fraud) and extend appeal deadlines
- Pause state tax audits
- Provide a 90-day property tax payment extension to business and residential property owners on their next property tax payment
- Provide a tax credit for business costs incurred for working remotely, including for purchases of laptops, high-speed internet, phone line, office equipment, etc.
- Extend the time frame for economic development tax credits or incentives that are based on meeting or maintaining certain employee levels in order to negate the negative impact in employment caused by COVID-19

Help businesses and professionals stay in business by providing relief from compliance burdens and regulatory flexibility meeting permit and professional licensing deadlines.



Broadband Infrastructure

Ensure broadband deployment and high-speed internet is a commonwealth priority since it is an essential tool for telemedicine, education, work from home, and business access to the international market:

- Extend telehealth coverage beyond for Medicaid and other health plans so providers can continue to provide telehealth



Protective Equipment and Medical Supplies

In the long-term, create additional and more streamlined emergency preparedness and resiliency standards that will allow the commonwealth to better weather similar health and economic events in the future:

- Provide clear guidelines on the proper use of PPE for employees and customers, use of temperature checks or other diagnostics, and cleaning and social distancing guidelines in the workplace - if businesses are following these guidelines, they should be certified as “safe”
- Invest in early detection and rapid diagnostic testing for a quick public health response
- Ensure stockpiles of medical equipment and supplies are adequate and accessible to critical response partners such as health systems and first responders



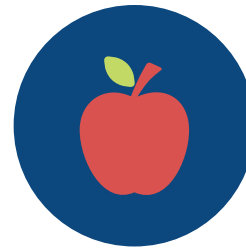
Unemployment Insurance

- Minimize the impact that layoffs resulting from COVID-19 affect a business’s experience rating for unemployment insurance for the entirety of 2020
- Mitigate unemployment insurance taxes on businesses struggling to reopen or maintain operations – the state unemployment insurance trust fund is set to run out by the third quarter of 2020



Workforce Assistance

- Make available workforce development resources and incentives for unemployed workers to upskill for in-demand employment opportunities
- Incentivize the workforce to return to work through policies that are more advantageous than unemployment compensation
- Increase the adoption of work-share provisions regarding unemployment benefits by incentivizing employers to use work-share
- Explore creative childcare arrangements and support for working families
- Support the childcare industry through special assistance and incentives to ensure workers can continue to contribute to the economy
- Create shared accountability for childcare
- Establish a trusted intermediary to guard the interests of the mixed delivery childcare and its professionals and ensure its capacity and stability to support economic and workforce recovery
- Provide clear guidance for safety and quality standards for the mixed delivery sector and clarify options for parents as they identify childcare to meet their work/life needs and preferences
- Increase supply of safe, quality childcare options that meet parental and child needs
- Incentivize employer-operated/subsidized childcare options at or near work sites
- Develop turnkey strategies to efficiently match available quality childcare supply with parent needs and preference (e.g., uniform rating; staffed networks/shared services; coordinated family enrollment mechanisms)



Education

Build educational resiliency in Virginia that embraces the strengths of distance learning

- Require the Virginia Department of Education to develop a statewide digital teaching and learning plan initiative
- Require the Virginia Department of Education to develop a statewide online course credit program to ensure all Virginia students have equal access to educational resources and learning opportunities
- Expand Virginia's Online Virginia Network (OVN) virtual learning capability at every higher education institution to meet high-demand degrees
- Ensure continued funding for Virginia's community college credentialing programs to address worker shortages in high-demand fields (like healthcare and IT)
- Ensure Virginia's Tech Talent Investment Program is fully funded to guarantee a workforce pipeline to meet the Commonwealth's technology needs
- Request the Department of Labor to provide states the flexibility to use Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to meet the diverse economic recovery needs of each state.