



April 6, 2021

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Pocahontas Building
900 E. Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Janet D. Howell
Chairwoman
Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
Pocahontas Building
900 E. Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Chairman Torian and Chairwoman Howell:

As you know, Virginia tourism and hospitality has been decimated over the last year by the COVID-19 pandemic. Various funds have been made available to different segments of the industry, but, to date, there has been no overarching support for tourism and hospitality as a whole. In 2019, tourism was a \$27 billion industry in Virginia, and it is estimated that \$10 billion of that was lost in 2020, with another \$3.8 billion to 7.8 billion to be lost in 2021.

With the funding that the Commonwealth of Virginia will receive from the American Rescue Plan (ARP), there is an opportunity to address the needs of key organizations that support tourism in Virginia – hotels, Bed & Breakfasts, and other lodging; restaurants; attractions; tourism support entities; campgrounds; and wedding venues. Supporting these organizations with additional funding will ensure that more businesses survive, that workers stay employed, and that tourism across the Commonwealth rebounds more quickly.

The Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association supports these organizations and is putting forward a proposal to fund grants for various segments of the industry, including:

- Hotels and other lodging establishments: \$184.7 million
- Restaurants: \$36.7 million
- Attractions: \$10 million
- Tourism entities:
 - Destination Marketing Organizations/CVBs: \$12.25 million
 - Virginia Tourism Corporation: \$20 million in additional funding over two years
 - Convention Centers: \$1.5 million
- Campgrounds: \$2 million
- Wedding Venues: \$4.7 million

In addition, VRLTA is requesting funds of \$1.5 million to expand the Association's hospitality job training and upskilling program as well as VRLTA's industry-specific job board.

Details on the pandemic's impact on tourism and hospitality, as well as more information on each of these requests, can be found in the attached document. For all of these programs, special consideration should be given to Minority-Owned Small Businesses, Women-Owned Small Businesses, Disability-Owned Business Enterprises, Small Disadvantaged Businesses, and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses.

We hope that you will consider the needs of hospitality and tourism in Virginia. The ARP offers a unique opportunity to thoughtfully and comprehensively support these critical underpinnings of Virginia's economy. Please reach out to me at eric@vrlta.org or 804-288-3065 or Robert Melvin, Director of Government Affairs, at robert@vrlta.org or 703-622-4455.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Eric Terry', written in a cursive style.

Eric Terry

President

Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association

Attachment – Virginia Stimulus Request

cc: The Honorable Ralph S. Northam, Governor of Virginia
Clark Mercer, Chief of Staff to Governor Ralph S. Northam
The Honorable R. Brian Ball, Secretary of Commerce and Trade
The Honorable Aubrey L. Layne Jr., Secretary of Finance
The Honorable Cassidy Rasnick, Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade for Rural Economic Development