



February 9, 2018

The Honorable Kenneth R. Plum
Virginia House of Delegates
Pocahontas Building
900 E Main St., Room No: E207
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Delegate Plum,

On behalf of the thousands of businesses we represent, we express our strong support of the budget amendment [House Item C-21.50#1h] for \$250,000 in pre-planning funds for the Science Museum of Virginia to establish a regional science center in Northern Virginia in partnership with the Children’s Science Center. A regional science center not only makes good sense for education, but also good sense for business.

A thriving STEM education ecosystem is critical to industry by fueling the pipeline for our technology workforce and providing education resources that attract new businesses and employees to our area. In addition to strong schools, an essential element of the ecosystem is a STEM-focused museum on which schools and families can rely for informal learning experiences that are hands-on, highly experiential, and share practical applications of STEM on a scale that is not possible to replicate in each school or home.

Museums are good for business, especially those museums well positioned to serve youth and visitors of all ages, being major attractions generating ancillary visitor spending and significant economic activity. In today’s challenging retail climate, developers are turning to “experience” providers to attract audiences by making museums their anchors. Museums are catalysts for community engagement and reflect the aspirations of their users. STEM focused museums offer a place to showcase the industry and innovation that make up the fabric of

their community. A recent study by Dr. Stephen Fuller of George Mason University underscores these benefits and estimates the economic impact of the regional science center at over \$11 M annually to the Commonwealth.

For all of these reasons, over recent years our organizations and member businesses have invested by way of grants, sponsorships, donations and in-kind support for the Children's Science Center, a Fairfax-based non-profit that serves schools and families in all jurisdictions of Northern Virginia. We support their efforts to provide interactive STEM learning experiences to youth across the region and to grow their impact by establishing a full-scale science center in Dulles, Virginia. Today, the Children's Science Center serves 70,000 visitors annually including families and schools throughout our region and must grow to meet the needs of hundreds of schools and a population of over 2 million in Northern Virginia.

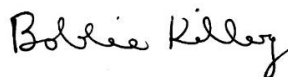
Positioned in the Dulles Technology Corridor, the future regional science center will be attractive to businesses, employees, and visitors from afar. Major technology companies moving or expanding from other cities expect such resources to be readily available in major market areas. Children of Amazon employees in Seattle for example, grow up visiting the Pacific Science Center and four other children's museums in their metro area. And the opportunity to attract tourists in route to DC attractions and invite them to spend more time in Virginia is equally compelling. With the future regional science center being 10 minutes from Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Center and in even closer proximity to rapid transit, Dulles-based day trips and overnight stays will be an increasingly attractive option for out of town visitors.

The Dulles location of the science center also leverages billions of dollars of investment that the Commonwealth and multiple localities have made in transportation infrastructure in the Route 28 and Dulles corridor. As a result, schools, families, and out-of-town visitors will have ready and regular access to the future science center.

Finally, a regional science center developed in partnership with the Science Museum of Virginia and the Children's Science Center is a smart solution to meet this significant need. The partnership leverages the strengths of the partners to expand a network of science centers across the Commonwealth, allowing for efficiencies in operations as well as enabling opportunities such as partnerships with industry to be shared state-wide.

The land donation for the future science center is time limited, and all are eager to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity. In representing the interests of businesses from across the region and given the many short and long term benefits this brings to businesses in the Commonwealth, we urge you to make this budget amendment a priority during this General Assembly.

Sincerely,



Bobbie Kilberg
President and CEO
Northern Virginia Technology Council



John Boylan
President and CEO
Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce



Jim Corcoran
President and CEO
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce



Anthony J. Howard
President and CEO
Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce



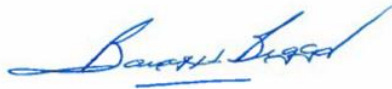
Paul Kohlenberger
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Deborah L. Jones
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Mark S. Ingrao
President and CEO
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Barry Biggar
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Beth Erickson
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cc: Amendment Co-Patrons
The Honorable John J. Bell
The Honorable Jennifer B. Boysko
The Honorable Karrie K. Delaney
The Honorable Timothy D. Hugo
The Honorable Matthew James
The Honorable Mark L. Keam
The Honorable Paul E. Krizek
The Honorable David A. LaRock
The Honorable Kathleen J. Murphy
The Honorable David A. Reid
The Honorable Mark D. Sickles
The Honorable Luke E. Torian,
The Honorable E. Vivian Watts