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Businesses consistently cite the availability of a qualified workforce as critical to their decision to locate or invest in a region. The VPCC supports efforts at all levels of education to ensure that Hampton Roads has the workforce we need today and in the future.

- Support a greater focus on career pathways helping younger students identify professional tracks of interest to them and offering the types of career and college preparatory programs necessary to allow students to succeed such as AP, IB, and CTE programs. VPCC recognizes Hampton Public Schools for leading the way with the Hampton Academies and the Ford NGL program and encourages other school systems to adopt similar programs.

- Support flexibility in state student funding formulas to incentivize localities to partner on shared training facilities such as CTE and credentialing programs. This partnership will allow access to these programs by more students and avoid the need for each school system to start duplicative programs.

- Support career training and pathways for individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Too often, the disabled “graduate to the couch” after their schooling and their employability skills are not developed. VPCC commends Versability Resources on their leadership on this issue and encourages businesses and training providers to work to serve this growing population.
• Support efforts to align workforce development efforts between the Peninsula and South Hampton Roads. Businesses in the region employ workers from both sides of the water and need a seamless access point into the workforce development system. VPCC commends the recent collaboration between Opportunity Inc and the Peninsula Workforce Development Council. We encourage the regional community colleges including Thomas Nelson, Tidewater, and Paul D. Camp to explore similar collaboration and possible merger of workforce development programs as has been successfully done in Metro Richmond.

• Support industry cluster collaboration around shared workforce development needs. VPCC commends America Builds and Repairs Great Ships for their leadership in this space in the shipbuilding and ship repair cluster and encourages more industries to follow suit.

• Support working with local education providers at all levels to develop and promote IT career tracks in the Hampton Roads region. As colleges and universities are incentivized to grow their IT programs in conjunction with Amazon’s investment in Virginia, it is incumbent upon the Hampton Roads region to do more to retain these graduates to support business needs here rather than simply being part of a pipeline to Northern Virginia.

• Support increased investment in early childhood education to ensure every child in the region has access to high quality programs early in life. The governor’s emphasis on this issue is important and VPCC sees this investment as a business imperative.
Hampton Roads has considerable untapped economic development potential. As a region with a skilled workforce, a high quality of life, and affordable cost of living, businesses should be lining up to invest in this region. VPCC supports policies to support the needs of incumbent businesses while simultaneously attracting new investment in the region.

- Support increased support of GO Virginia. Hampton Roads has already experienced success in the first years of GO Virginia with investment in cybersecurity, digital shipbuilding, and a UAV facility. More efforts to bring the region together around shared needs and opportunities will be vital for ongoing success.

- Support the needs of the science and technology industry in the region. Hampton Roads, and the Peninsula specifically, have unique opportunities in this sector with the ion collider at Jefferson Lab, the transition of our legacy shipbuilding industry into a digital age, and the location of the high speed cables in Virginia Beach. All of these present unique opportunities for additional businesses to grow and thrive in the area which should be encouraged. With Amazon’s investment in Northern Virginia, related businesses looking to be near HQ2 should be encouraged to invest in Hampton Roads.

- Continue support for Jefferson Lab and related initiatives such as the Center for Nuclear Femtography, including the $500K included in the Governor's budget.
• Support the region’s vital tourism industry. 2019 is a critical year for tourism in Hampton Roads with the American Evolution commemoration which will shine a particular light on Jamestown and Fort Monroe. Through the 2019 commemoration, Fort Monroe’s linkage to the events at Jamestown will be highlighted and will demonstrate the need to expand the existing Historic Triangle branding to include Fort Monroe.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a broad term encompassing everything from transportation to energy – all of which are vital to the future of Hampton Roads. VPCC supports investment in infrastructure that will serve the region’s current needs while positioning the region for future growth.

TRANSPORTATION

• Support the priorities of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization

• Protect Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission funding from being raided by the Virginia Department of Transportation to pay for projects that should be VDOT funded such as the islands at the HRBT.

• Support the widening of I-64 in New Kent County to create a three-line highway from Hampton Roads through Richmond

• Support increased use of transit in the region to include passenger/rail as well as bus rapid transit to connect high concentrations of residents with their workplace and entertainment venues
UTILITY

- Leverage the high-speed cables coming into Virginia Beach to encourage more high-tech businesses to invest in Hampton Roads

- Support the permitting and construction of the natural gas pipeline spur to Hampton Roads to ensure the future energy needs of the region

- Support efforts to fully fund state programs such as the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) that enable local governments to partner with existing internet service providers to share in the cost of constructing “last mile” networks to unserved rural areas of Virginia.

- Support off-shore energy investment in Virginia while requiring that siting of any off-shore investment be done in collaboration with the military and the Port to ensure no interference with DOD or shipping channels

- Support efforts to streamline and standardize local permitting procedures and requirements across the region

OTHER

- Support regional, state and federal investments to protect regional infrastructure against sea level rise

- Encourage continued investment in the growth of the Port of Virginia. In the past, regional, state, and federal governments have made major investments in port infrastructure including channel dredging, port modernization, and the Heartland Express. VPCC supports continued investments in Port and transportation infrastructure to ensure the efficient movement of cargo into and out of the region.
The military investment in Hampton Roads has long driven the regional economy. Even during efforts to grow and diversify the economy, the military presence in the region must be maintained and grown. All efforts should be taken to ensure that Hampton Roads remains an attractive region for military investment, a welcoming region for military families and veterans, and a region that will be guarded against negative impact of future BRAC commissions.

- Support the creation of a statewide “Military Installation Support Fund” to assist with infrastructure needs around military installations such as roadways, resiliency, energy, etc.

- Support universal licensure for military spouses to allow them to find work in Virginia immediately upon locating here without having to redo trainings or certifications for jobs they already hold.

- Support codifying the need for Virginia to follow DOD siting processes when locating offshore wind turbines or drilling rigs

- Support William & Mary’s request for $250K to expand their new Whole of Government Center of Excellence with additional faculty and a Deputy Director. This program provides military officers and inter-agency civilian personnel with a comprehensive education on whole of government solutions to national security issues and helps establish the region as a thought leader on the subject.
Virginia’s reputation as a low-tax state has made it attractive to business investment for generations. While VPCC recognizes government’s need to have sufficient funds to invest in priority needs like education, workforce development, and infrastructure, it is important that it be done in a way that does not hurt Virginia’s competitive advantage on taxes.

- Support a comprehensive review of Virginia’s tax incentives with immediate phase out of any that are not effective in their stated purpose.

- Support the Virginia Chamber of Commerce on matters related to federal tax conformity.
The health and wellness of all residents of Hampton Roads is a concern of employers and government alike and is vital to the job readiness of the entire workforce. Additionally, the health care industry is a significant regional employer that will continue to have a strong demand from residents. At the same time, businesses struggle to keep up with rising health care costs. VPCC supports policies that ensure adequate and appropriate access to healthcare, keeps the healthcare industry strong, and limits increases in healthcare costs to businesses and employees.

- Support a strong COPN law to protect hospitals’ ability to provide medical services to all, promote quality of care, and provide a full range of essential health services. While VPCC is receptive to appropriate COPN process-related reforms, piecemeal deregulation of select services would present significant financial challenges, jeopardize critical services, and endanger the sustainability of hospitals.

- Support the successful implementation of Medicaid expansion to include optimizing enrollment of newly eligible individuals, protecting provider assessments from diversion, and completing the design of federal waivers to promote the sustainability of the program.
Hampton Roads benefits from an extraordinarily high quality of life. The region includes greenspace, water access, diverse night life, and reasonable cost of living. Many VPCC policy positions such as infrastructure improvements, access to quality healthcare, and low taxation are meant to retain that quality of life.

- Oppose any legislation that would be discriminatory against any class of person in Virginia and support protections for groups who face a history of discrimination. The diversity of the Hampton Roads region is one of its great assets. Employers and employees alike look down on states and regional that fail to protect the rights of persons based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability status, etc. This is a business issue.

- Support investment that enhances the regional quality of life including green space, recreational facilities, nightlife, and culture. VPCC commends efforts by the HRPDC and aligned organizations to create multi-use trails to connect the Virginia Capital Trail to Fort Monroe and to Virginia Beach.