

Statement on Proposed Substitute to *Resolution to Restore Public Confidence*

NAACP Arlington Branch

March 10, 2023

The NAACP Arlington Branch urges the Arlington County Civic Federation (“CivFed”) to pass the NAACP’s proposed resolution to enhance communication and accountability in Arlington County governance.

CivFed must decide whether it wants to be merely expressive, or effective. The current draft resolution suffers from fatal defects that make it highly unlikely to prompt meaningful engagement or change from the county. In particular, the draft channels grievances from a select few, relies on assumptions that county officials and staff do not share, and levies accusations that are unfair or unfounded. These defects resulted from the drafters doing what they accuse the county of doing: pursuing a predetermined outcome, rejecting contrary views, pushing for a hasty decision with little public deliberation, refusing to compromise, and ultimately failing to build consensus. Passing the current resolution would bless a flawed process and seriously undermine CivFed’s credibility.

Building consensus is what the NAACP seeks to do here. The NAACP’s alternative resolution reflects the valid concerns and recommendations in the current draft, while also incorporating perspectives from marginalized communities that the drafters had overlooked. This alternative finds common ground among diverse views. It is focused, brief, and accessible. Its recommendations are realistic and actionable, including concrete steps the county can take to provide more opportunities for two-way conversations, improve accessibility of information about policies in development, explain how public input shapes those policies, and engage with a wider range of residents. The core goal of this alternative is not to complain, but rather to convince. CivFed must work with the county, not against it, to improve public engagement. For these reasons and others, the NAACP’s proposed resolution provides a better path to increasing public confidence in county governance.