



March 31, 2022

Dear Arlington School Board Members,

The Friends of Arlington's David M. Brown Planetarium ask you to fund a full-time planetarium director for 2022-2023 academic year and commence a nationwide search for the right person to fill this essential Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education position. Because the director plays both prominent role in the formal education of our students and a public role in science outreach to the whole community, selection of the most qualified individual should not be a rushed affair, nor an afterthought funded midyear when year-end close-out funds may be available.

The Planetarium director must be an engaging and committed science teacher, who is highly knowledgeable in the fields of astronomy and earth sciences as well as conversant in other scientific disciplines. The Planetarium director must be an accomplished presenter capable of teaching at all curriculum levels, of providing outreach programs to adults and other community members, of answering press inquiries, and of training part-time operators. The Planetarium director must be technologically savvy to run and maintain the state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and to develop new custom programming. The Planetarium director must be a capable administrator to schedule all the academic programs, coordinate all community use, oversee part-time operators, and manage the program budget. The Planetarium director must be a creative and charismatic leader who can ensure the full capabilities of the facility are realized through including programs about more STEM fields, expanding its role in arts education, and supporting summer courses.

With these many responsibilities, the Arlington Public Schools should anticipate a new Planetarium director would require at least 3 months to be ready to offer her or his first year of teaching. If the projection system was not being modernized, APS would expect to provide this start-up time through "extra days" added to a his or her teaching contract. Delays in the execution of the projector contract mean this preparatory time can take place during the first few weeks of the academic year, without additional expense. Even without the projector, the director should learn the existing catalog of programs and their standards of learning objectives, schedule the standard field trips, and make connections with administrative staff and educators. Once the projector is installed, the director will be responsible for establishing its functionality. The director and any part-time operators will also need a mix of in-person and virtual training to use

the equipment effectively. Rebuilding this important educational program will take time.

In the unlikely event that the completion of the projection system is delayed beyond the first few weeks of the academic year, a full-time planetarium director could still provide valuable enrichment by traveling to individual schools. Science teachers have expressed a desire for this alternative access to astronomy content until the Planetarium is fully functional.

The Friends are committed to maintaining quality STEM education for all Arlington students. The Planetarium is a vital part of the APS curriculum, in part, because its previous directors have been gifted teachers. Arlington has a world-class facility; it deserves a passionate and exceptional leader. Restoring the Planetarium director position to the 2023 budget is the first step towards re-opening the Planetarium as an integral and inspiring component of the STEM curriculum.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to educating our young people. Please let me know if you have any questions related to this request or our organization.

With Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Lynn Bartlett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Jennifer Lynn Bartlett, PhD
President, Friends of Arlington's David M. Brown Planetarium