

From: **Sales, Lisa [USA]** <Sales_Lisa@bah.com>
Date: Mon, Aug 3, 2020 at 11:48 PM
Subject: FOIA Council Comments for August 4th
To: foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

Dear FOIA Council:

I urge the FOIA Council to establish an Electronic Meetings Subcommittee as I support HB321. It is long overdue for the Commonwealth to take action on Section 2.2-3708.2 of the Virginia Code. New technology now makes revising the policy regarding electronic participation for meetings of public bodies more achievable. Even before COVID-19, I was a big fan of this bill and now, I find it essential. The pandemic has brought with it both good and bad, and it has taught us that we can still remain civically active while completing the necessary work for our communities and our people. A side benefit is that it has made us all feel less isolated and technologies such as Zoom and WebEx have enabled us to do everything from calls to full panels successfully! We should do everything we can to permit electronic participation in meetings on the limited basis outlined, and **most especially to remove barriers to civic engagement and increase participation**. The overwhelming majority of Boards, Authorities and Commissions are composed of residents who serve voluntarily. I know because I serve on two plus a number of subcommittees and try to maintain a full time job. Additionally, I serve on a number of other policy committees that are not held to the governmental requirement. One such committee is that of the nonprofit Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance; its members come from all over the state and we split our time between in-person and Zooms calls during normal times. This arrangement does not inhibit the work but on the contrary helps us be more efficient with our time together and prevents missed meetings and long-distance travel mishaps. I see no reason why the Commonwealth's public bodies cannot perform similarly.

I have seen firsthand how fellow Councilmembers on my local Domestic Violence Policy Council and Commissioners at my Commission for Women meetings have sometimes struggled to make meetings because they have children, aging parents, or an ill relative, or sometimes it is just because the commute to our Court House or Government Center (where meetings are held) are quite far from home or office, especially during a D.C. commute at rush hour – add weather and/or construction to these elements and meetings can be missed. Many would like the opportunity to call in or use Zoom or WebEx technology on occasion to avoid completely missing a meeting. While I am a huge proponent of in-person/face-to-face meetings, **sometimes busy caretakers and professionals need some flex in their schedules when everything does not go as planned.**

Public bodies benefit from a diversity of voices and experiences and better reflect the populations they represent when they include such members. Not to permit this disproportionately impacts women who try to juggle it all – kids, job, caring

for a sick loved one. Women help make policy better and we need to make certain they have increased opportunities to participate, not fewer.

I have lost a couple of good folks on my Commission because a young child was having a rough night and simply needed mommy home to tuck him into bed. She could have done both! Hers was an important and valued voice, her legal expertise counted on and trusted, but we lost her. Please consider a revision to the existing policy.

I can be reached at (703) 624-0387 should you require further comment or future testimony in support of this matter. Many thanks for your consideration.

Hope you are all staying safe and well!

Best,

Lisa Sales

- Fairfax County Commission for Women | Chairman and Mt. Vernon District Commissioner***
- Fairfax County Council to End Domestic Violence | Councilmember & Social Impact Committee***
- National Medical Reserve Corps, Emergency Operations | Project Manager, COVID-19 Testing Sites (NoVA)***
- Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance | Public Policy Committee***
- Good Shepherd Housing | Board of Directors***
- ERA Coalition | Adviser***
- VAratifyERA | Leadership Team (Formerly)***

Lisa A. Sales, M.P.A., CMAP