

From: **Ruth L. Saunders** <ruthlowe10@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Nov 17, 2020 at 1:32 PM
Subject: Comments for FOIA Council re: Electronic Participation
To: <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

Dear Members of the FOIA Council,

My name is Ruth Saunders and I live in Chesterfield County. My husband Jason and I have two young girls, aged 1 and 4. I used to serve on the Chesterfield County Youth Services Board. However, I had to resign because I could not participate in-person at all of the meetings because I lacked childcare.

State law should not restrict women like me from participating in our government. Especially when the past eight months have taught us that electronic participation in meetings can be effective. As a member of the public, I benefit from a government that reflects my community and includes a diversity of voices and experiences.

Please remove the Commonwealth-imposed limit for how often a member may participate electronically. Virginia is one of only a handful of states that restricts individual electronic participation. It is time we moved the Commonwealth into the 21st century. Technology exists and I hope you agree that it is important to make public service (whether elected or appointed) more accessible for all Virginians, so that we may achieve more representative, effective public policy.

I also support a study in 2021 regarding electronic meetings outside of an emergency as this can make participation in such meetings more accessible for members of the public like me, as well.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Ruth

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Ruth L. Saunders