

From: **Lee Moise** <lee.moise@buchanancounty-va.gov>

Date: Wed, Apr 28, 2021 at 10:28 AM

Subject: Written Comments in opposition to changes proposed in HB2000

To: foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

Dear FOIA Advisory Council members: Please accept this e-mail as Buchanan County, Va. written comments in opposition to the proposed changes in regard to how charges can be assessed for processing FOIA requests. Buchanan County is a small rural County in the coal field region of Southwest Virginia. The County has been forced over the last several budget cycles to make significant budget cuts due to declining revenues. COVID-19 has further compounded the budget problems that Buchanan County has been experiencing. The proposals in HB2000 providing for “free” search and processing time of up to 8 hours per requester per 31 day periods will place another burden on our small staff in the County Administrator’s Office. Even for a small rural County we receive frequent FOIA requests that take time away from the regular duties of the County Administrator’s staff. If the changes proposed by HB2000 are approved Buchanan County will be prevented from recovering the costs of processing many FOIA requests which will place even a greater strain on an already tight budget and significantly reduce the productivity of the County Administrator’s small staff. The Virginia of Freedom of Information Act is to provide transparency of local and state government agency activity, but it should not be accomplished at the costs of those agencies, particularly local governments that are struggling with budget problems compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, on behalf of the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors, I respectfully request the FOIA Advisory Council to recommend that the changes proposed in HB2000 in regard to how charges can be assessed for processing FOIA requests not be approved.

Sincerely,

Lawrence L. Moise III, County Attorney, for Buchanan County, Va.