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Subject: Comments on possible expansion of the reasons why and how many times a Public Official can call into a meeting instead of attending in person

To: <[foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov)>

November 16, 2020

Virginia FOIA Council Subcommittee:

If a person seeks election to a public office and is successful in this desire, such an elected official needs to attend in person any and all of the meetings of the governmental body to which he or she has been elected. There is no electronic, video, audio, or virtual substitute for the taxpaying public maintaining the right and having the ability to watch, hear, and speak to elected public officials face-to-face in the same meeting room at all times.

If an elected public official needs to be absent *from the public's meetings* for whatever personal reason, the particular elected public official should make that decision and do what he or she decides is best for him or her.

The watching, hearing, speaking — and researching, tracking, and voting — public, can decide later at the ballot box whether an elected public official's absences outweigh a favorable vote and a possible return to office.

The only exceptions to elected public officials not meeting in person where the public can attend at the same time should be for local, state, or federally-declared disasters of a war-like nature, internationally-sanctioned health catastrophes, or weather emergencies endangering the personal safety of meeting attendees.

Seriously submitted,

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