

To Whom it May Concern,

This email is to provide written testimony regarding the Electronic Meetings Subcommittee of the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council discussion on House Bill 321 slated to occur on October 20, 2020.

I am writing to you as the President-Elect of the Virginia Municipal League, as the current Chair of the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments [Chesapeake Bay & Water Resources Policy Committee](#) (CBPC) and as the current Vice-Chair of the newly formed [Food and Agriculture Regional Member Ad-Hoc Committee](#)

I would like to first highlight the VML position on this issue:
VML supports legislation reviewed by the FOIA Council that allows flexibility in the number of meetings a member of a governing body may participate in electronically due to a personal matter as defined in the electronic meeting policy adopted by the governing body.

I would also like to provide my real world experience on the value of conducting virtual meetings, including meetings that do not require a quorum to be physically present in a room together. I have conducted all of the meetings of the CBPC since the spring as all virtual meetings. I have found that engagement and attendance in these meetings as actually increased from previous in person meetings. Further, by eliminating the need to travel to the same location, it has encouraged participation from members in jurisdictions that have previously not been as engaged. Anecdotally, I have seen this same outcome for VML meetings as well.

Finally, I would like to highlight that the newly formed FARM Ad-Hoc Committee occurred after the Spring, so the entire formulation of this group, including adoption by the COG Board was done virtually.

I would welcome the chance to provide further examples of my direct experience as you consider this issue.

Thank you for your service to our Commonwealth,

Jon

Jon Stehle, Council Member
City of Fairfax