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Date: Sun, Jun 20, 2021 at 9:10 AM

Subject: Please Loosen the Electronic Meeting Rqts and Allow Commissions to meet virtually anytime

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

Dear FOIA Council,

I echo everything said in the form letter (below). Personally, . . .

I serve on the Fairfax Commission for Women. Not requiring members to drive to the Fairfax County Government Center where we meet in person has empowered Commissions in mid-career to serve on the Commission. Driving to in person meetings easily adds two hours in commute time to serve. In NOVA the commute and traffic curtail working people and college students from serving.

Meeting electronic has enabled all our members to attend more meetings. I echo the barriers to serving if one has children who need childcare. On a side note, we had a teenage boy easily attend our meeting virtually to meet a Boy Scout badge requirement. His father signed him in virtually rather than having to drive him to the meeting location in person.

We've also increased visitor participation with a clear process for visitors to attend our meetings virtually. We've had visitors at every virtual meeting while when we met in person, we had one visitor every six months or so.

Please consider loosening the requirements for meeting in person and allow for a virtual option all the time. Virtual meetings are not going away; and society has learned how to work in them. Sci-fi precludes real inventions and changes in society. If Star Trek can communicate virtually so can (and should!) we!

#### BEGIN FORM LETTER

I serve on an appointed board and would like to see flexibility for public bodies to hold electronic meetings outside of an emergency, as a majority of other states allow.

We have seen participation increase - both by members of the public and members of our board - during the shift to virtual meetings. The opportunity to hold electronic meetings removes barriers to participation including transportation and childcare. Removing such barriers leads to a more equitable and transparent government.

Flexibility for electronic meetings would also allow boards to respond to urgent issues and have more effective subcommittees. Executive Committees and subcommittees can not currently meet electronically and scheduling additional in-person meetings can prove difficult; however, the ability to hold such meetings electronically (while still maintaining proper noticing requirements) would help us fulfill our mission and serve the public better.

Please help us be more effective, transparent, and accessible by recommending to the General Assembly that other public bodies be granted flexibility to meet electronically outside of a declared emergency.

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