

From: **Mary-Jane Atwater** <mjatwater@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 2:13 PM

Subject: Support for HB2050

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

To whom it may concern,

I am co-founder, past board chair and a volunteer at LOWLINC Village (Lake of the Woods Living Independently in Our Community) in Orange County, VA. We are a nonprofit, community-based organization that supports older adults at Lake of the Woods so they may remain in their homes safely and independently with continued connections to the community. I am writing in support of HB 2050 that allow for great flexibility in using electronic or virtual meetings by local and regional bodies while also providing for public access and administrative record keeping.

The current Virginia Freedom of Information Act allows only 25% of public body meetings to be held electronically -- a restriction that applies to local advisory boards and commissions, including the Commission on Aging. Due to cost and distance from the meeting venue, many older adults are unable to attend these meetings in person, which excludes them from taking part in civic matters and leadership. In addition, many older adults no longer drive, and there is virtually no public transportation in Orange County. During the pandemic, many older adults became more comfortable using Zoom and other online meeting platforms and thus do not find electronic meetings to be a barrier. Electronic meetings would expand opportunities to engage older adults in matters of importance to them and the community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Mary-Jane Atwater

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