



November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Senator Locke  
Electronic Meeting Subcommittee  
Virginia House of Delegates  
201 N Ninth St  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Locke,

Over the past few years, the changes made to allow limited all-virtual meetings have shown that they do not provide flexibility to meet the variety of needs of appointed boards and commissions. Nor do the current changes allow all members of the public the opportunity to serve their community. We have seen meetings get canceled and/or scheduled work get postponed due to a lack of in-person quorum.

**Support HB2050/SB1351**

- The Northern Virginia Chamber strongly supported HB2050 and SB1351 during the 2023 session. These bills would have increased flexibility for local advisory and regional bodies to hold all-virtual meetings, while retaining guardrails and guidelines to ensure public access.
- These bills are permissive and not mandatory; no one has to hold virtual meetings and localities can place additional restrictions beyond the state rules for their advisory bodies. They would also not apply to elected bodies, planning commissions and other bodies that are currently not allowed to hold all-virtual meetings.
- These bills will afford greater participation in government by our members and residents across Virginia who volunteer their time and expertise to serve our Commonwealth.

**Support Additional Flexibility for State Advisory Bodies**

- HB2050 and SB1351 only applied to local advisory and regional bodies. However, the same issues apply to the numerous state advisory bodies and their subcommittees.
- These boards are uncompensated and expecting members to travel across the Commonwealth is unrealistic.



### **Support Changes to Quorum Requirement for Individual Remote Participation**

- The Chamber support's exempting people with disabilities from the quorum requirement. However, there are many reasons why someone may need to participate virtually, and this exemption alone will not solve the problem that many boards are facing.
- There are already significant restrictions on how and when a member can participate remotely to prevent abuse.

### **Support Voting for Individuals Participating Remotely**

- Individuals participating remotely should be able to vote. When members are barred from voting, it removes their voice and undermines their participation.

### **Final Remarks**

Before COVID, a majority of states allowed electronic meetings and participation without numerical restrictions outside of an emergency. In addition, to writing on behalf of the Northern Virginia Chamber, it is critical to note that I personally I strongly support these bills. As a young professional who has served on a handful commissions at the local and regional level, I can attest to the benefit these changes would provide. It will allow young professionals the ability to not have to choose between career growth or community involvement. The Northern Virginia Chamber and I encourage you to support the modernization of the Virginia Code.

Sincerely,

Nick Clemente