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February 17, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

While the Virginia Municipal League (VML) was disappointed in the General Assembly's recent passage of SB1157 mandating that localities with May elections move to November, VML would like to offer a suggestion to assist localities in complying with this legislation. Currently, the bill will affect all local elections held after January 1, 2022. The membership of VML would strongly encourage you to consider amending SB1157 to allow localities until November 30, 2024 to comply with this legislation.

Allowing this extra time will afford localities the opportunity to determine whether an odd or even year election cycle would best serve both their residents and their potential candidates. By allowing the delay, it also removes any potential lawsuits relating to the extension of terms of office as this extra time will allow localities to ensure that their terms of office are appropriate and in compliance with their current practice. In addition, it will allow localities time to properly vet this decision with their residents during the public hearings that they are required to hold.

Without providing extra time to comply, localities will be forced to act within the next month in order to align themselves with either an odd or even year election cycle. For the 105 towns across Virginia many who only hold public meetings once a month and have newspapers that are not weekly, it will be impossible to draft an ordinance, allow for advertising, hold a public hearing, and approve said ordinance in that time frame.

The suggested language would be on line 27 after the word "date" to say "Such ordinance shall be adopted by November 30, 2024."

We appreciate greatly your consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact Michelle Gowdy at mgowdy@vml.org or (434) 579-3497 to discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "MG", written over a white background.

Michelle Gowdy

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