



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health
P O BOX 2448
RICHMOND, VA 23218

M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA
State Health Commissioner

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November 9, 2020

Ms. Suzette Denslow
Clerk of the House of Delegates
State Capitol
Third Floor, 1000 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: COVID-19 Recommendation to the Virginia House of Delegates

Dear Ms. Denslow:

Thank you for meeting last Wednesday with Virginia Department of Health (VDH) staff to discuss the risks of COVID-19 transmission and mitigation measures for the 2021 General Assembly Session. On July 28, 2020, VDH provided you with COVID-19 Guidance for the Virginia General Assembly that was used to inform mitigation measures for the most recent 2020 Special Session. As we move closer to the full 2021 session, you requested additional guidance from VDH regarding the use of virtual meetings, self-screening of General Assembly members and staff, and testing strategies for members and staff of the General Assembly.

As noted in VDH's Guidance, virtual-only activities, events, and gatherings present the lowest risk of COVID-19 transmission. At that time, VDH encouraged the use of telephone calls and virtual meetings in place of face-to-face interaction whenever possible for members and staff of the General Assembly. COVID-19 transmission is currently rising in multiple regions of Virginia and increasing the risk for in-person meetings of individuals from around the Commonwealth. The increase in indoor activities and added complications of influenza during this time of year further increase the risk of in-person meetings. Additionally, the crowded offices, meeting space, and elevators in the Pocahontas Building are factors that increase the risk of spreading COVID-19.

Based on these factors, VDH, in consultation with the Richmond City Health District, strongly recommends the House of Delegates conduct the 2021 General Assembly session virtually to the greatest extent possible. Conducting the 2021 General Assembly session in-person not only increases the risks of transmission for General Assembly members and staff, it

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also increases the risks for the communities those members serve as they travel back home and sometimes to and from.

Thank you for meeting with VDH staff and working so closely with us to implement appropriate mitigation strategies to protect the General Assembly members, staff, and the public. Again, VDH strongly recommends the House of Delegates conduct the 2021 General Assembly session virtually to the greatest extent possible. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

M. Norman Oliver, MD

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M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA
State Health Commissioner

cc: Danny Avula, MD, Director, Richmond City Health District