



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

RICHMOND

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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
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March 31, 2019

By Email - Delrbell@house.virginia.gov

Honorable Robert Bell
Courts of Justice Chair
Virginia House of Delegates
2309 Finch Court
Charlottesville, VA 22911

Dear Chairman Bell,

Thank you for notifying us of your proposed plan to hold a Courts of Justice hearing regarding the allegations against the Lieutenant Governor.

The House Democratic Caucus believes that the allegations against Lieutenant Governor Fairfax are extremely serious. As such, the House Democratic Caucus called on him to resign. We also believe that Vanessa Tyson and Meredith Watson's voices should be heard and in a forum that is free of partisan politics and preserves the rule of law. Law enforcement officials are best equipped to investigate these matters, and we certainly would not want to harm their inquiries or deny due process to either the complainants or the Lieutenant Governor by conducting a hearing that could easily be exploited for political purposes.

Many members of the House of Delegates have serious concerns regarding whether such a hearing in a political body would be impartial and could result in a "highly charged political environment"—a concern echoed by representatives of Vanessa Tyson. House Democrats have repeatedly expressed this view, and unfortunately, our concerns have not been assuaged by continued efforts of the majority.

A hearing regarding criminal allegations against an elected official would be unprecedented in Virginia. It is my understanding that the House of Delegates has never taken an action of this nature, even when previous elected officials in our chamber and in our executive branch have been accused of criminal behavior. We are concerned that enacting the plan that you have proposed would establish an ill-defined precedent for the future, which could be abused.

As you know, we are a legislative body, and we do not have law enforcement investigative capabilities or legal authority such as subpoena powers. The majority of members of the House of Delegates are not trained to conduct hearings into criminal allegations, nor ask questions of the accusers or the accused in a public forum. In addition, we believe any such hearing would be of a political nature, particularly in an election year, and it would not provide the accusers the fair and impartial forum they deserve.

Furthermore, there is the possibility that law enforcement investigations in the jurisdictions in which the reported incidents occurred are ongoing and we have grave concerns that any hearing by the Virginia House of Delegates could impede any potential criminal investigation.

As such, we do not believe that the House of Delegates, or any selection of legislators, is the appropriate body to hear these serious allegations. All of the individuals involved deserve a non-partisan process in which to testify. We do not have the confidence that such a hearing, in the House of Delegates, as that proposed in your letter would be able to deliver justice and due process to all involved.

Given the expressed desire of Dr. Tyson and Ms. Watson that they want an opportunity to be heard, we remain open to discussing the option of engaging an independent, third party entity to conduct a hearing while taking into consideration fairness and due process for all involved in a non-political, professional and safe environment in a manner that would not impede or compromise any possible ongoing investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eileen Filler-Corn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eileen Filler-Corn
House Minority Leader

cc: Honorable Kirk Cox (by e-mail)
Honorable Charniele Herring (by e-mail)
Honorable Vivian Watts (by e-mail)