

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

Office of the Mayor

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February 24, 2022

Hon. Kathy J. Byron, Chair
Hon. Robert D. Orrock
Hon. Nicholas J. Freitas
Hon. Roxann L. Robinson

Hon. Chris S. Runion
Hon. Kathleen Murphy
Hon. Sally L. Hudson
Hon. Don L. Scott

Dear Chair Byron and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am writing to ask you to vote to report out Senator Deeds' bill, SB 298, and Senator McClellan's bill, SB 472. Senator Deeds' bill would add Charlottesville to the list of localities that is allowed to have a referendum on raising the local portion of the sales tax by 1% to enable us to fund school reconstruction; Senator McClellan's bill would extend that permission to all localities in the state.

Charlottesville needs this bill. We have not built a new school in 50 years, and we have two schools that were built in the 1960's with very little glass that some students say reminds them of a jail. It was built in a style that seemed good in the 1960's, but we now know that it is not. I won't bore you with the educational details – suffice it to say that after studying the issue for 15 years, architects and educators agree that we need to reconfigure those schools. The cost for remaking one of the schools is given to us at \$75 million, and the cost for all of the schools to be fixed will top \$100 million. This project is basically designed, it is ready to be built, and we just need to figure out how to pay for it. We have looked long and hard at how we can pay for this project. The \$75 million will consume our capital budget for the next 5 years, at least.

The math is simple – if we pay for this project by raising the real estate tax rate, we would have to raise the rate by 20%, and even then we would not be able to continue our efforts to redevelop our public housing complexes, to bring our fire and police department facilities and equipment up to contemporary standards, to pay for a needed redesign of our jail, or to fund large transportation improvement projects or even projects like new sidewalk construction. It just isn't enough. Only the 1% sales tax increase for the schools will get us there.

We have broad support for this sales tax increase from both Democrats and Republicans in Charlottesville. We ask you please to report these bills out favorably.

Sincerely yours,

J. Lloyd Snook, III

Sean Lynch
February 23, 2022
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Mayor