



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

ROBERT B. BELL
2309 FINCH COURT
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22911

FIFTY-EIGHTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COURTS OF JUSTICE (CHAIRMAN)
COMMERCE AND LABOR
HEALTH, WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS

June 17, 2019

By Email: Delefiller-corn@house.virginia.gov

Honorable Eileen Filler-Corn
Minority Leader
Virginia House of Delegates
P.O. Box 523082
Springfield, VA 22152

Dear Minority Leader Filler-Corn:

I write to you once again following the pleas from Dr. Vanessa Tyson and Meredith Watson to testify concerning what happened to them and giving them a public forum in which to be heard.

On Wednesday, attorneys for Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax released a letter they had sent to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office stating that "Dr. Tyson's allegation should be promptly and fully investigated." This is a stunt; if Lt. Governor Fairfax wished to be investigated, he could simply present himself to Suffolk County officers for a recorded interview. Alternately, he could agree to a hearing before the General Assembly. Instead, he continues to avoid questions in interviews and to communicate only through written communications by counsel.

Following the release, Dr. Tyson and Ms. Watson released separate statements reiterating their desire for the Virginia General Assembly to allow all parties to testify under oath and present witnesses. Attorneys for Dr. Tyson said it best:

His suggestion that women are liars unless they press criminal charges against their assailants places an unfair demand on survivors and shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the criminal justice system. Pursuing criminal charges is a weighty decision that the vast majority of survivors choose not to make for legitimate reasons. Lieutenant Governor Fairfax would force survivors to rely on the criminal justice system to defend their credibility, or else remain silent about the trauma they have experienced.

The criminal justice system is not the only way government officials like Lieutenant Governor Fairfax can be held accountable for their actions. The Virginia General Assembly has its own independent responsibility to ensure that Virginia's leaders have the character and temperament to represent the Commonwealth.

(Emphasis added.)

As you know, both women have stated that they will only participate in legislative hearings if the hearings are public and both Republicans and Democrats participate. I wish to renew my offer for truly bipartisan hearings. The ranking Democrat on the Courts of Justice committee would serve as co-chair on any subcommittee that would be formed and the partisan make up would be exactly even. This means that no decision on subpoenas, procedural issues, or scope of testimony would be made without bipartisan support.

We Republicans stand ready to give Ms. Watson and Dr. Tyson the bipartisan public hearing they have asked for. Some of your members have expressed privately and publicly their desire for hearings. We respectfully ask the Democratic Caucus to agree to something – anything – that would allow bipartisan public hearings to take place.

The upcoming Special Session provides a good opportunity for this hearing to take place, or at least to be arranged and scheduled for later in the summer.

I await your response and stand ready to work together to form any process acceptable to you and the House Democratic Caucus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Bell". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Rob Bell

Delegate, 58th District