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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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Board Matter

January 25, 2022

Mr. Chairman— As many of us understand firsthand, there are few undertakings more stressful than installing your child’s car seat for the first time. Parents and caregivers throughout Fairfax County rely on first responders to assist them in safely installing their children’s car seats. While the County’s program to assist parents install and inspect car seats was previously administered jointly by the Fairfax County Fire and Police Departments, it is now under the sole jurisdiction of the Police Department, while a separate program is administrated by the Sheriff’s Office.

These programs are currently run independently of each other and face serious challenges due to geography and staff availability.

As the Board is aware, FCPD has been faced with staffing issues which have contributed to a shortage of officers, and there is currently a critical deficit of officers with the required training to properly install car seats. This has resulted in excessively long wait times for parents trying to schedule an appointment for a trained officer to assist with the fitting of their children's car seats.

We recognize that this backlog is not due to the actions of the Fairfax County Fire, Police, or Sheriff's Departments, but has been caused by external factors and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following consultation with representatives from the Police, Fire, and Sheriff's Departments, Supervisor Alcorn, Supervisor Walkinshaw, and I believe that a more centralized and coordinated effort is needed to improve the County's car seat installation services, and we are pleased that the public safety staff that we have consulted with enthusiastically agree.

Therefore, Supervisor Alcorn, Supervisor Walkinshaw, and I move that the County Executive assign the appropriate staff to convene a working group to study possible steps which can be taken to

improve the County's current car seat installation program. In addition to the Fairfax County Police, Fire, and Sheriff's Departments, the group should include members of the Office of the County Attorney, the Department of Emergency Management and Security, and a small number of County residents who have familiarity with the program.

The group will explore alternative solutions, including but not limited to a hybrid model where day-to-day car seat installation appointments are offered at County facilities while the Police, Fire, and Sheriff's Departments jointly hold regularly scheduled workshops at various locations throughout the County to improve accessibility, as well as the possibility of partnering with outside organizations such as car dealerships or hospitals to offer car seat fitting services by trained employees. The group will also investigate the option of incorporating car seat inspection training into the existing public safety academy curricula, certifying administrative staff at public safety facilities in car seat installation, and potential legislative solutions which could impact

car seat safety training. The working group will report its findings to the Public Safety Committee for additional consideration after a 3-month period.