



## House Bill 0028

*Constitutional Amendment—Form of County Government—Requirement  
to Adopt Charter Home Rule*

Position: UNF

Date: **January 28, 2025**

To: Environment and  
Transportation

On behalf of the Caroline County Board of Commissioners, I am writing to express our strong **opposition** to **HB 0028** the proposed constitutional amendment regarding the form of county government and the requirement to adopt charter home rule. While we understand the desire for reforms to county governance, we believe this bill introduces a series of concerns that warrant careful reconsideration.

The most pressing concern is the timeline set forth in the bill, which mandates that all counties, including Caroline County, adopt a charter by December 31, 2031. This requirement places significant pressure on local governments, especially smaller counties like ours, to transition to a charter system within a very short period. Such a rushed transition could lead to unforeseen consequences, including a lack of necessary resources to implement the changes effectively and potential disruptions in local governance.

Additionally, the bill's provisions centralizing the charter adoption process in a charter board are problematic. While we agree that reform is necessary in some areas, the proposal could undermine local control and limit the ability of voters to directly shape their county's governance. By removing some of the current checks and balances, the bill risks creating a less transparent process, potentially diminishing the voice of residents in shaping the future of their county government.

The shift to councilmanic districts for county council elections is another aspect we find concerning. This mandate could lead to divisions within our communities, particularly in rural areas, where the need for broader representation may outweigh district-based elections. Caroline County is a rural community with unique needs, and such a shift could diminish the ability of all areas of the county to have fair representation of the council.

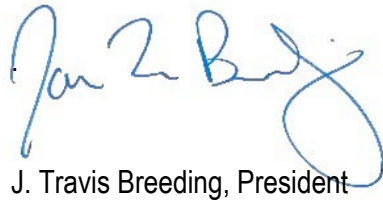
Furthermore, the provision requiring counties that are not currently operating under a charter to appoint a charter board by January 1, 2028, could create significant challenges, especially in counties like ours that may not be ready for such a shift. This process is not only expensive but could also result in a lack of clarity and coordination in the transition to a new system of government.

We believe that decisions about the structure of local governance should be made with careful consideration, input from the community, and flexibility to accommodate the unique needs of each jurisdiction. While we are committed to ensuring efficient and accountable government for our residents, we feel that HB 0028 (introduced in the 2024 Regular Session as HB 0081) does not provide the necessary flexibility or time for a thoughtful and effective transition.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to reconsider this bill and work toward an approach that better respects the autonomy and unique needs of counties like Caroline. We are committed to collaborating on solutions that will improve governance without imposing undue burdens on our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to further discussions on this issue and appreciate your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Travis Breeding". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

J. Travis Breeding, President

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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