



**Testimony of Becky Straus, Legislative Director
In Support of HB 3513
House Committee on Rules
May 13, 2013**

Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 3513. I apologize that I have a scheduling conflict at this time and hope that you will consider this written testimony.

The stated purpose of Oregon's public meetings laws is to ensure that the public is aware of the deliberations and decisions of their governing bodies and that these decisions be arrived at in a transparent and open way. To that end, all meetings of a public body must be available and open to the public to attend – a meeting defined as “the convening of a governing body of a public body for which a quorum is required in order to make a decision or to deliberate toward a decision...”

The Lane County decision, *Dumdi v. Handy* (2011), muddled an already fuzzy line between what does and does not constitute a public meeting, and what communication amongst members of the body constitutes deliberation. HB 3513 is an attempt to address some of the resulting confusion and bring clarity, to the extent possible, to these issues.

We were pleased to be included in a workgroup, convened by Senator Prozanski and joined by a collection of stakeholders including the League of Oregon Cities, the Association of Oregon Counties, and the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, to discuss these issues. The ACLU's interest is in maintaining the philosophy behind the public meetings law, which is to make sure that decisions and deliberations of public bodies happen in public.

We believe that the modest improvements proposed in HB 3513 take a step toward greater clarity in public meetings laws and do not do so at the expense of transparency. We urge your support.

We are thankful for the opportunity to participate in the workgroup, to Representative Hoyle for bring this bill forward, and for your consideration of HB 3513. Please feel free to be in touch at any time with any questions you may have.