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To: House Rules Committee
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon
Re: Support for HB 2974

Common Cause supports HB 2974 to hold public hearings as part of the redistricting process.

Common Cause

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization that works to safeguard and improve the democratic process. For 45 years, the organization has helped strengthen public participation and faith in our institutions of self-government, and has worked to ensure that government serves and is accountable to the public interest.

Role in Redistricting

Common Cause has a history of leadership on redistricting, both nationally and here in Oregon. The organization played a nonpartisan, public interest role in Oregon's last redistricting process, providing input to the House and Senate redistricting committees, public information through the media, and by working to support public participation in hearings organized by the legislature. Following redistricting, we released a report: [*Oregon's 2011 Redistricting: Successes, Concerns, and Recommended Improvements*](#), which lays out recommendations for specific reforms to improve our state redistricting, including the recommendation addressed by this bill.

Support for HB 2974

During the last redistricting process, the legislature organized hearings around the state to enable public input. These proved valuable, both for the legislative process itself and for public understanding of the process. We commend the legislature for this.

This excellent and non-controversial process should be institutionalized. I want to thank Rep. Lininger for getting this concept drafted on behalf of our redistricting coalition, as outlined in the Common Cause recommendations, and thank all three co-chief sponsors (Rep. Lininger, Rep. Hoyle and Rep. McLain) for submitting this bill. Key provisions include:

- Establishes public hearings as part of the redistricting process
- Specifies that hearings be held not only *before*, but also *after* draft maps are available
- Specifies *at least 10* public hearings held prior, and *at least 5* held after drafting maps
- Specifies that the hearings be held *throughout the state*, with *latitude as to where*
- Provides for *remote participation* through the use of video equipment

Other Versions of the Bill

I am very appreciative that Rep. Parrish and Rep. Hack are also offering leadership on this issue, submitting the same concept with some variation. I thank them for their leadership as well.

Since it will be necessary for the committee to unite behind a single bill, I will speak briefly to the differences between the two bills here. I believe that all of the chief sponsors of both bills are quite open to work together on a single bill toward the common goal.

There are two points where the bills differ:

- *Number of Hearings* – Our recommendation is for at least 10 hearings *before*, and 5 *after*, as written in the bill before you. This recommendation is based on our experience during the last redistricting process of what felt sufficient, without being too repetitive, or burdensome for the legislature to manage. We would not oppose a larger number of hearings, but believe that 10 & 5 serve as the better minimum.
- *Location of Hearings* – Our recommendation is to not be too prescriptive on location, in order to allow flexibility for addressing areas of most concern. We agree with the provision in this bill before you of prioritizing areas where there has been the greatest shift in population. We would not oppose the language included in the other bill to distribute the hearings equally around the state, but believe that more flexibility here is more useful.

While I believe that both bills would move us further in the right direction, HB 2974 more closely outlines the essential provisions initially recommended by our coalition.

Common Cause commends the House Rules Committee for deliberating on this important issue. We urge you to support HB 2974, voting it out of committee for consideration by your colleagues in the full House Chamber.