

MARK HASS
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 14



COMMITTEES:
Finance and Revenue, Chair
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OREGON STATE SENATE

February 10, 2020

Chair Riley and Committee,

For the record, I am Sen. Mark Hass, representing Beaverton and Aloha in Washington County. I am testifying in support of SB 1506. It helps insulate the Public Records Advocate from political pressure and preserves the Advocate's status as an independent office by removing the governor as the appointing authority of the Advocate and giving that power to the Public Records Council.

Oregon's public records law declares that *"every person has a right to inspect any public record of a public body in this state."* We need to make sure the Public Records Advocate is empowered to protect this important right. As we saw last year, the governor's appointing authority gives the governor's office inappropriate control over the activities of the Advocate. In order to be a truly neutral, independent office, the Advocate should not serve as a member of the governor's staff.

In order to limit the governor's influence over the position, the Public Records Advocate should be chosen by the Council—not appointed by an elected official.

SB 1506 also gives the Public Records Council the ability to support or oppose legislation relating to public records laws and allows the Council to request that a legislator introduce legislation relating to public records laws. It is important that the Council be able to give its opinion on what is best for Oregonians' access to public records and to use its expertise to help the state act transparently.

These changes will make the Public Records Advocate more independent and less vulnerable to outside political pressure. Oregon public records law is founded on the principle that Oregonians are entitled to a transparent democracy. SB 1506 helps ensure that transparency.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark Hass'.

Senator Mark Hass
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