

March 4, 2021

House Democratic Leader Barbara Smith Warner, Chair
House Republican Leader Christine Drazan, Vice-Chair
Representative Paul Holvey, Vice-Chair
House Committee On Rules

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 2560

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan, Vice Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee

I am writing to express my support of the passage of HB 2560. This bill will result in more options for Oregonians to participate in public meetings and hearings by requiring that all such events can be attended remotely (when reasonably feasible). and that when oral and written testimony is being sought that they can delivered remotely.

My support of the bill is informed by my experience as city planner. I retired after working for the City of Gresham from the mid-1980s thru the mid-2010s. During my tenure at Gresham I worked as a development planner, a long-range planner, the Comprehensive Planning Manager and, at retirement, the Planning Department Director. This work meant countless public meetings: Planning Commission, Council, Hearings Officer, standing City committees, project Steering committees, community workshops and open houses..

I can attest that being able to participate in these meetings only in person and often at night left many people out of the planning process. Those with mobility issues; with meeting at night issues; with childcare issues; and with being unfamiliar or uncomfortable with City hall. Those who tended to participate were often the same group of people or representative of those groups. And despite Gresham's increasing diversity seldom included those from groups who have historically been underrepresented in the public process

During the pandemic I have been serving on the LCDC Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC). DLCD staff has done a great job of inclusiveness in the 40 or so person RAC with about half of the members representing groups that traditionally have not participated in these types of RACs. I have been impressed with the the attendance and level of participation of the members. I don't think this could have happened if these meeting were exclusively in-person and requiring members to spend the additional time and effort to travel to Salem or to other parts of the State.

I have also been able to participate in my community's (Portland) meeting remotely and have appreciated the time and cost of driving or transit saved by not having to go downtown.

I do realize that not all Oregonians have the technology to participate remotely but Oregon can only benefit when there is greater opportunity for more inclusion and participation. Passing HB 2560 will advance the vision of State Planning Goal 1 of "opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process."

Thank you for your attention to my testimony and encourage to vote HB 2560 out of committees with a do-pass recommendation.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Harker, AICP
House District 45