

To: House Rules Committee
From: Cristina Nieves, Common Cause Oregon
Re: Per Diem Support of our Boards and Commissions
Date: March 23, 2021

Common Cause:

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization that works for open, honest, accountable government. We are over one million Americans – including roughly 30,000 Oregonians – working together to realize the unfinished promise of democracy.

As such, Common Cause supports [HB 2992](#).

Democracy flourishes when participation in uninhibited.

Our democracy is based on the people's ability to engage with the political process. However, we know that historically and currently, there have been barriers to participation based on race, ethnicity, political connections, and financial standing. Nevertheless, we have seen major change and progress when these barriers are removed and all are able to enable their right to change the policies and practices of our government.

Boards and commissions are foundational to a democratic process.

Not everyone is able to run for office. Boards and commissions give us a way to tap broader public expertise and perspectives and give the public an opportunity to influence policy and the general direction of our government. It is a tool for community members to learn and also educate on how changes and implementation of new laws impact our communities. Many crucial decisions are guided by the feedback and direction provided by those who serve on boards and commissions. Legislators look to these individuals to inform policy decisions and implementation. We should support these individuals in their mission to serve the public. This opportunity to influence and serve should be open to all, regardless of their financial capacity.

Per diem support will enhance the public's ability to engage.

There are many barriers to participating on a board or commission. From childcare, to travel time, we need to make sure that all people serving on boards and commissions have the necessary resources to do so, just as we must do for elected officials. Now more than ever, we need all voices to be able to be at the table of the crucial decisions we have ahead of us. We urge you to vote yes on HB 2992, which will open the doors to folks who want to take a role in public service and civic duty.

Thank you again for considering this testimony.