

The opportunity for civic engagement, to participate in our local government, is an essential part of a representative democracy. When participation in meetings and hearings requires attendance in person, it discriminates against those without the means or flexibility to travel to Salem. In effect, this discriminates against women (more likely to carry burdensome family responsibilities), young people (new to and intimidated by the political process), the less wealthy (more likely to work jobs with inflexible schedules), and people of color (more likely to be affected by a number of limiting factors). Anyone who wants to participate should be reasonably accommodated, whether they are the parents of small children, folks without easy access to a vehicle or otherwise unable to travel, people who work long hours, or for any other reason can't afford the time or expense to show up in person. The pandemic has shown us how it is possible to conduct business remotely and thereby include a broader cross-section of our community in the process of governing our state. As a new mother, there were a number of activities this last year, political, professional, and otherwise, that I was only able to participate in because they were conducted remotely. Civic participation shouldn't be a luxury. Please pass HB 2560.