

Dear Members of the Senate Housing and Development Committee:

The Covid 19 pandemic has expanded businesses' and individuals' views of what is possible with remote access. I hope that Oregon will continue its requirement that all local governments provide a remote access option of local public hearing and meetings.

To me this is an expansion of equality. I grew up on a farm and I know my father and sister, both deceased now, struggled at times to attend meetings with county commissioners or city councils or farm organizations. For many rural Oregonians, going to the state legislature in Salem is a huge and sometimes impossible distance and time commitment. Remote access is an equalizer.

Remote access also helps women with child responsibilities be more equal. They do not need to find babysitters. As a once single mother, I know this is a huge equalizer.

Finally, we have individuals who are disabled or who cannot drive. Sometimes local meetings are held at night and as people age, they are increasingly troubled by night driving. Again, the remote access empowers all these individuals and makes them equal.

The Covid 19 pandemic has restricted us in many ways, but remote access to local public hearings is not a restriction. It is an expansion of equality. Surely, we all should support that.

Thank you for this opportunity to support HB 2560 and to support equality.

Kathleen Carl