

Please Support HB 2560A

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2560A.

Friends of Yamhill County supports this bill making permanent remote access and participation in public meetings. An informed citizenry and full public participation make for better deliberation and decision making.

My own experience is largely with land use and legislative hearings. In the last year we have seen citizens who would not normally be able to attend hearings participate. Their reasons include unable or unwilling to drive, especially at night or in bad weather. Some have work commitments out of town or that limit their availability. Health and family dynamics challenge others.

It should not be made the only option as there are barriers for this as well as the pre-COVID-19 methods. Zoom and related platforms have had their share of glitches, but organizations are learning and investing in the technology.

This bill would allow jurisdictions to continue to improve without fear of stranded investment. There are savings of time and travel costs, especially in remote areas. Less traffic on the roads are safety and emissions issues.

As a resident of a rural area with limited telecommunication investment COVID-19 has raised again the specter of the digital divide. I mention this not as a reason to oppose this bill but rather to add this to the list of reasons to work toward expanded broadband access. Even when schools fully reopen students will need web access to get the best education. More and more public and private enterprises have stopped publishing material in hard copies. Old DSL infrastructure does not support streaming content.

But a broadband aspirational goal should not prevent passing this bill.

Thank you.

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