



February 11, 2021

TO: Senate Committee on Labor & Business
FR: Charlie Fisher, State Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)
RE: SB 500

OSPIRG is a statewide, citizen-based, public interest group with thousands of members around Oregon.

OSPIRG supports SB 500.

Oregonians have a right to know how government decisions are made and how taxpayer dollars are spent. Ensuring government transparency enables us to hold elected officials accountable and push back more effectively when powerful interests try to game the system.

As an independent public interest and government transparency advocate, OSPIRG has been involved in many public records requests over the years. Although many public bodies go to great lengths to comply with the law and provide expeditious access to public information, we have experienced a lack of uniformity in processes, timelines, expectations, and interpretations of the underlying law.

We were a participant in the Attorney General's Public Records Task Force that led to the creation of the Public Records Advocate. We strongly supported the legislation creating the position because it gives the public greater recourse when government agencies are reluctant or slow to release information. In order to fulfill this mission, the Public Records Advocate must be independent from the very government agencies with a vested interest in its work.

By ensuring the independence of the Public Records Advocate, SB 500 rightly acts to maintain the public's expectation that the decisions made, and input given, by the Public Records Advocate is in the purpose of transparency.