

Dear Committee Members:

I urge you to support HB 2560 and to expand what is already suggested within the bill. Both local and state government can be difficult for most people to participate in, even when they're interested in a topic. School age citizens may not be able to drive yet, even if they're interested in a topic. The meeting times are held when many people are working, caring for children or other family members, or otherwise occupied. Winter weather and darkness present another barrier, particularly in rural areas. And finally, the format of these meetings can present difficulties to people with hearing loss or those whose first language is not English.

Our own local municipal government posts audio recordings, but despite having used ZOOM for more than a year, does not post the video of the recordings. This means that many listeners (again, particularly those with hearing loss or less comfort in listening to English) can struggle to know who is talking or what is being said. This means that government may "appear" transparent but be far from transparent.

I volunteer with an organization that routinely requests video recordings and makes them publicly available, and we find far more people engaging with those videos than only with audio recordings. So I would suggest that you go further in your bill:

- Video recordings should be made available of all public meetings. Local officials should be shown with their names underneath their pictures to allow constituents to know who is speaking;
- The recordings should be accompanied by a posted "timestamp" document to show when items were discussed. (Again ... although there is an agenda for all public meetings, some of these meetings can take 3 or 4 hours. An interested citizen may only wish to listen to the discussion about a new police station, or perhaps to a discussion about parking requirements. Letting people get to what they want to hear quickly would be a big benefit to most citizens. And since most legislative bodies have someone recording information produce minutes, it's not particularly burdensome for the government body to do this).
- The recording should be posted to take advantage of platforms that provide language translation and closed captioning to extend information to all communities.
- Recordings should be posted within 24 hours (and frankly, minutes should be posted in a timely manner too).
- People presenting testimony via a remote access means should be allowed to testify with video as well as audio. Failing to allow video testimony and limiting testimony to voice-only diminishes the effectiveness of some testimony, and places the person making the testimony at a disadvantage compared to those who can be both seen and heard.

Passing this bill will be a step towards more transparency and greater citizen involvement.

Thank you.