



THE PUBLIC RECORDS ADVOCATE SUPPORTS THE PASSAGE OF 2023 SB 510

OVERVIEW OF SB 510

- Requires the office of the Public Records Advocate (“the Office”) to estimate expenses in advance of the upcoming biennium and develop a proposed budget in conjunction with the Department of Administrative Services and the Legislative Fiscal Officer;
- Permits the Office to assess state agencies to recoup estimated biennium expenses; and
- Requires the Office to adopt rules specifying the method for allocating biennium expenses.

BACKGROUND

- The Office was created by SB 106 (2017);
- The Advocate mediates disputes between public records requesters and custodians, provides free trainings to public employees and the public about requirements and best practices under Oregon’s public records law, assists with drafting and updating public body record disclosure policies, and is the executive director and a voting member of the Public Records Advisory Council;
- While the existence of Office furthers state goals of transparency, the first Advocate resigned in part due to perceived political interference in the operations of the Office;
- In response, the Public Records Advisory Council introduced SB 1506 (2020) to establish the Office as an independent state agency. Although widely supported, the bill was not passed before the session came to an early conclusion. SB 500 (2021) retained the concepts of SB 1506 while answering questions about Office funding and succession planning, such as by establishing the Public Records Advocate Fund in the State Treasury, separate and distinct from the General Fund;
- **SB 510 (2023) is the final step in establishing a clear, sustainable source of funding for the Office;**
- The funding model includes each public body in state government as defined in ORS 174.111 as all three branches of government have participated in and benefit from the services provided by the Office; and
- SB 510 will guide the Office in creating and assessing key performance measures to improve accountability and oversight for the Office’s continuing growth as a formal state agency.

OUTCOME

- SB 510 establishes a stable funding model in line with the Office’s proposed budget and ensures consistent and effective services to all state and local public bodies.

The Office of the Public Records Advocate would appreciate your support on this important proposal to ensure the ongoing independence, stability, and success of the Advocate’s work.

Questions? Please contact Todd Albert, Public Records Advocate, at todd.albert@pra.oregon.gov or 503-871-9036