

Submitter: Steve Suo  
On Behalf Of: Self  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure: SB417

Greetings. I come to you as a five-year member of the Oregon Public Records Advisory Council. I am a working journalist, previously at The Oregonian and now at USA TODAY.

This bill is the product of a yearlong public process in which our council heard testimony from Oregonians and from representatives of other states like Kentucky, Connecticut and Oklahoma, as well as from the federal system. We learned that these governments charge essentially nothing for records requests under a wide variety of circumstances. There are no debates about line items or whether a request merits a fee waiver. Disclosure simply happens as part of the cost of doing business in these places, including in states with much less revenue than Oregon's.

I see a lot of merit to this concept, but that is not what we chose to pursue with SB 417. Instead, we developed a balanced approach that builds on existing Oregon law. It focuses on accessibility for records when their disclosure can be shown to further the public interest, preserving ability for public bodies, even when the public interest exists, to limit a waiver because providing the records will substantially disrupt government operations.

I was pleased to join the diverse set of interested represented by the Oregon PRAC in supporting this measure, and I hope you will as well.

Steve Suo