

April 14, 2025

Chair Ben Bowman
Members of the House Rules Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR. 97301

Chair Bowman Members of the Committee,

The Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) represents approximately 950 districts with 32 types of districts across the state that play a crucial role in delivering essential public services to our citizens, including fire protection, water supply, sanitation, libraries, parks and recreation, irrigation and more.

Some background about our members: 38% of our members are run exclusively by volunteers, 75% of our members have 5 or fewer employees if we include districts who have 0 employees, 45% of our members have budgets of \$100,00 or less and another 35% have budgets of \$50,000 or less.

On April 3rd, SDAO's Board of Directors voted unanimously in support of the principle behind HB 3883, and we would like to thank Representative Wallan for its introduction. It's two sentence simplicity sets a clear expectation that all governing bodies should be required to provide time for members of the public to address their elected officials. It is SDAO's position that this bill should be given due consideration because we believe citizens should be able to address their elected officials, thereby fostering trust and transparency between government bodies and the communities we serve.

The bill's simplicity does create some challenges, and we would like to work with Representative Wallen to clarify its applicability. Specifically, we recommend that the bill not specify when citizens should address the public body. Additionally, public bodies should be given the latitude to determine what is reasonable as it relates to the amount of time and relevancy to the public body's business.

As representatives of local government, we understand the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with our constituents. Public meetings are a cornerstone of democratic governance, providing a platform for citizens to voice their concerns, share their perspectives, and engage in the decision-making process.

When citizens feel that their input is genuinely considered, it strengthens their trust in government institutions and encourages greater civic participation. This, in turn, leads to more informed and effective policymaking, and benefiting our communities as a whole.

We recognize that implementing this change may require adjustments to meeting agendas and procedures. However, we believe that the benefits of enhanced public engagement related to business before the public body should be promoted and protected. By prioritizing the voices of our constituents, we demonstrate our dedication to serving their best interests and upholding the democratic values that underpin our society.

We respectfully urge you to consider our suggested modifications. Together, we can build a more transparent, inclusive, and responsive government that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of the people we represent.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Landauer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Landauer
Lobbyist
Special Districts Association of Oregon