



Subject: HB 4177

Feb. 16, 2026

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Pham, members of the Committee:

I'm writing on behalf of the Greater Oregon Society of Professional Journalists to respectfully request that you reject House Bill 4177.

This legislation was intended to be a fix-it bill to address "serial communications," but appears to have grown well beyond that. Changes that in our view undermine the Legislature's pro-transparency intent have been made at a pace that defies full vetting and discussion — notwithstanding the inherent complexity of this statute.

Most recently, we see that myriad changes were proposed today in the -2 amendment, giving our organization and other members of the public scant ability to fully vet them.

As past Legislatures have repeatedly noted and honored, Oregon Public Meetings Law plays a critical role in ensuring Oregonians know what is happening with their government.

Our Code of Ethics calls upon SPJ to ensure the public's business is conducted openly. We appreciate that Rep. Sosa involved SPJ in the work group. In recent weeks, our due diligence concerning late-breaking changes in the bill led to discovery of other problems with it. We appreciate Rep. Sosa's diligence in trying to address some of the issues raised.

Unfortunately, the bill's most problematic areas remain — including a provision that appears to significantly narrow what the public is allowed to know about (Section 1) and language (Section 5) that we believe creates major loopholes that could be used to block members of the public from knowing how decisions affecting them are made. We believe these changes would erode public trust, while eliminating the sideboards that have helped well-intentioned volunteers and elected officials operate in a way that honors Oregonians' expectations and the Legislature's intent.

Respectfully yours,

Nick Budnick, board member, Sunshine Chair, Society of Professional Journalists, Greater Oregon chapter