

Submitter: Alex Downing
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4177

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Pham, and honorable Committee Members:

My name is Alex Downing, and I am the City Recorder for the City of Corvallis and a member of the Oregon Association of Municipal Recorders (OAMR). I am writing in my personal capacity to urge your support of HB 4177.

HB 4177:

- clarifies when public meetings law does not apply, while preserving transparency;
- appropriately assigns violations to the public body instead of individual members of the governing body when a public meeting administrative error has been made; and
- extends the filing period for public meeting grievances.

As a City Recorder, one of my core responsibilities is ensuring compliance with public meetings law. Following the passage of HB 2805 (2023), my fellow Recorders across the state and I worked hard to understand the new legislation and help others in our organizations – both staff and elected officials – navigate the changes. However, despite our efforts to comply, significant questions about the legislation and Oregon Government Ethics Commission's (OGEC) interpretation have proven difficult to resolve and require a legislative fix.

Please do not wait until next session to address this urgent need for clarification. Written testimony from Benton County Commissioner Gabe Shepherd, Bend Mayor Melanie Kebler, and Wilsonville Mayor Shawn O'Neil illustrates the issues faced by elected officials across the state. Because of these unanswered questions, staff are unable to provide clear and confident guidance to those they support.

Please pass HB 4177 to create some needed clarity in public meetings law and allow local governments to function in a way that is both transparent and practical.

Thank you for your consideration,
Alex Downing, CMC
City Recorder
City of Corvallis