

Testimony for the House Rules Committee
Informational Meeting, Overview of Public Records

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Good afternoon Chair Williamson and members of the Committee. I'm Betty Reynolds, Public Member on the Attorney General's Public Records Law Reform Task Force.

With a Ph.D. in Public Admin and Policy, and having served eleven years as the Executive Director of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission, I deeply value openness and transparency in government, and Oregon's long history of public meetings and records in ORS Ch. 192. But because of that long history, the number of exemptions have become unwieldy and compliance, more complex.

I believe Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum has shown leadership in tackling the difficult challenge of streamlining the laws while preserving the openness and transparency of the original laws. She convened a group with diverse perspectives, and she and Assistant Attorney General Michael Kron assured a collaborative process, where those diverse perspectives were respected. She also provided ample opportunity for public input in a series of hearing throughout the state, and acceptance of comments which are part of the Task Force's deliberations.

We worked hard to come up with proposals that streamline the laws and improve access, especially in a digital age; timeliness; tools such as a searchable catalog of exemptions; and compliance – while preserving the original intent. The work is not complete, but I'm hopeful you view the proposals favorably, as the result of an open and collaborative process to improve laws that are essential to preserving the public's access to government.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.