



CRAG LAW CENTER

LEGAL AID FOR THE ENVIRONMENT SINCE 2001

March 3, 2021

House Committee on Rules
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2560

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan & Members of the House Committee on Rules:

I offer this testimony on behalf of Crag Law Center in support of HB 2560. Crag Law Center is a non-profit public interest law center that provides free and low-cost legal services to community groups, conservation organizations, and Native Tribes who are working on the ground to protect our environment, climate and communities. For 20 years, Crag has assisted Oregonians throughout the state with engaging in their local land use decision-making processes. Ensuring opportunities for robust public participation and access to justice is integral to our work and our mission.

HB 2560, which would make permanent the current COVID-related requirement that local governments provide remote access options for public meeting and hearings, furthers the foundational principal of Oregon's land use system. Statewide Planning Goal 1 is to develop a program that ensures the opportunity for all Oregonians to be involved in all phases of the planning process. While we believe more can and should be done to improve accessibility to Oregon's land use system and public decision-making, HB 2560 would be a meaningful step forward in ensuring equitable access to public processes, especially for those who are otherwise left out of the process because of circumstances that may prevent them from participating in person.

As many local governments have already adapted to the COVID-related remote access requirement, permanently extending the requirement should not create a substantial burden on local decision-makers. On the other hand, reverting back to a system where public participation is available by in-person attendance only would be contrary to the objectives of Goal 1 and would waste this opportunity to carry forward something positive from this devastating pandemic.

We fully support and encourage you to vote yes on HB 2560.

Sincerely,

Courtney Johnson
Executive Director