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March 4, 2021

Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, Chair
Committee Members
House Committee on Rules
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2560

Dear Chair Smith Warner and Committee Members:

1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice.

We strongly support HB 2560, which would make permanent the current COVID-related emergency/temporary requirement that all governments provide a remote access option for public hearings and meetings, "to the extent reasonably possible."

Goal 1 of Oregon's land use program is Public Involvement; it represents a commitment that Oregon's residents will be provided accessible, equitable, and meaningful opportunities to participate in their community decision-making, at all levels of government. HB 2560 is exactly what Goal 1 is all about. Most of the changes we have all endured due to the corona virus pandemic are things we want to see in the rearview mirror, but providing remote access to government is not one of them. We should celebrate and continue the quick pivot that governments made to adapt across all decision-making.

Remote access to public hearings and meetings opens these to so many more Oregonians, as the in-person only nature of meetings excludes those who do not or cannot drive; many disabled individuals; rural residents who live far from their county seat or city hall; those who have family, school, or other obligations that prevent them from coming in person; and those of lower income who cannot leave jobs to testify in-person, to name a few examples.

The extent and diversity of public testimony you have received supporting HB 2560, and the range of organizations who have endorsed the bill (see attached), demonstrate the life-changing impact that providing remote access to government decision-making has had and will continue to have for all Oregonians. HB 2560 represents a significant step to providing equitable access to government decision-making.

We ask that you support HB 2560. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Deputy Director

