

February 10, 2021

Dear Senators Riley, Hansell, Jama, Kennemer, and Lieber:

Thank you for your service to Oregon, including on the Labor and Business Committee, and thank you for moving SB 500-2 through the legislative process. I'm a member of the Public Records Advisory Council. As you know, the PRAC is made up of a variety of stakeholders, many with direct experience and expertise in the public records process. As a group we have put our support behind this bill. I wanted to add to that vital backing a few words of my own.

SB 500 is similar in many regards to a measure (SB 1506) that gained broad backing last session, successfully passing the Senate with bi-partisan unanimous support. Unfortunately, it was not finalized in the House before the Legislature's early end. But this is a better bill, clarifying several key questions about funding for the Office of the Public Records Advocate and leadership on the Council.

The heart of the measure establishes the independence of Oregon's Public Record Advocate. Because the Advocate's effectiveness rests on trust, independence is vital. This also establishes the Council as the body selecting the Public Records Advocate. While members of the group sometimes hold disparate perspectives, we have demonstrated many shared goals and the ability to work together. I believe the structure envisioned in SB 500-2 will serve Oregon well.

This has been a legislative priority of the Council for some time. I hope that, with your backing, the Legislature will approve SB 500 and the Council and Advocate can move on to tackle other public records issues of great interest to Oregonians.

I would be more than happy to talk further with any Senator about the bill.

Thanks very much,

Emily Harris

Member, Oregon Public Records Advisory Council