

Submitter: Brandy Penner  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB4140

Good morning, Chair Smith-Warner, Vice Chairs Breese Iverson and Fahey, and Members of the House Rules Committee.

For the record, my name is Brandy Penner. I am a publicly elected official serving on the Newberg School Board. In addition, I serve on the Oregon School Board Association Board of Directors and am the current school board advisor to the State Board of Education. More importantly, I am a mom of three kids in Newberg public schools.

I support HB 4140 because I have seen the consequences of a system with no support or repercussions for elected officials who violate public meeting laws. Currently, the onus is placed squarely on communities and private citizens to police and enforce these laws.

Public meetings, illegal meetings, and serial meetings are not subject to the Ethics Commission, leaving public recourse for wrongdoing only accessible to those with money, connections, and the confidence required to file a civil lawsuit. Parents and teachers are spending time and money simply attempting to hold their elected officials accountable for breaking the law. This is a heavy burden and has created insurmountable barriers for most.

This power dynamic marginalizes and excludes vulnerable community members who cannot hold officials accountable through a legal challenge but could more likely inform a complaint-driven process. This bill allows the public to hold elected officials responsible for their actions. It is not punitive except in the most egregious cases.

Under the current law, people feel discouraged and powerless. I have encountered this myself. I have had to explain to constituents that there is no recourse; there is very little that they can do beyond hiring an attorney and suing to bring any accountability.

I've committed myself to serving my community and the children of Oregon, but without support from state lawmakers, I fear further erosion of public trust in government. Without enforcement, our public meeting laws are ineffective, disregarded, and taken advantage of by individuals acting in bad faith.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue and for your time and the opportunity

to testify today. I urge you to vote yes on HB 4140.