



Oregon Association of Student Councils

707 13th St. Suite 100 Salem, OR 97301

admin@oasc.org

(503) 480-7206

Date: Thursday, February 10th, 2022

TO: The Honorable Barbara Smith Warner, Chair
House Committee on Rules

FROM: Miles Palacios, Executive Director
Oregon Association of Student Councils (OASC)

SUBJECT: HB 4140 – Public Meetings Law

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Fahey, and Members of the Committee;

I am writing today in support of HB 4140, a bill that would expand transparency and accountability in Oregon's governing bodies. HB 4140 would allow the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) to conduct investigations, make findings, and impose penalties for the violations of public meeting law. An important addition to this bill is the inclusion of training for the bodies subject to the OGEC's expanded duties, equipping leaders with the tools to be successful public servants.

As an association which serves student leaders, teachers, and schools across the state, OASC understands how important this legislation can be for our members' communities. Much of what we teach the youth in our program is that their voices are valuable and that they have a right to be represented in their experiences. School boards—a governing body that would be subject to the OGEC's expansion of duties—should believe the same.

Under HB 4140, students would have the tools to hold their school board accountable when their voices are censored by unlawful meetings kept from the public. These illegal meetings omit the opportunity for students to give feedback about policy and budgetary decisions that impact their day-to-day lives and futures.

Students have already seen what can happen when systems and processes are not followed. In the recent firing without cause of Newberg School District's Superintendent, the local school board violated public meeting laws and by doing so silenced the voices of their community, including their students. Without any measures of accountability currently in place, the community must rely on a lawsuit or recall effort to take back their agency. A formal complaint process would have created more equitable means for everyday Oregonians to address infractions like this.

When HB 4140 passes there will be better training, accountability measures, and procedures that will not only protect the rights of constituents, but better equip the leaders who serve them on governing bodies. Thank you for taking the time to read my words, and I urge your support of HB 4140.

Sincerely,

Miles Palacios