



February 6, 2024

Senate Education Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support Senate Bill 1502

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,000 supporters statewide. **We strongly support Senate Bill 1502, which would increase transparency by requiring public schools and college boards to live-stream their meetings and post the meeting recordings on their websites and social media sites. It would also allow people to submit testimony remotely for all meetings that permit people to provide testimony in person.**

We hope that this bill formalizes a practice that many adopted by necessity because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The opportunity for concerned constituents to participate in public meetings remotely, including the opportunity to testify remotely, is one of the few upsides of the upheaval caused by COVID. We commend the legislature for continuing this practice even as you have resumed meeting in person.

We are seeing a rise in school boards taking problematic actions that infringe on students' rights, from seeking to ban books; or as in the case of the Newberg School Board, seeking to restrict the content of speech that affirms LGBTQIA+ or Black students. Transparency is a critical component of protecting civil and constitutional rights.

By passing Senate Bill 1502, you are taking an important step in making local school boards and college boards more accessible and more transparent. You are strengthening our democracy at a time when it is deeply needed. **The ACLU of Oregon urges your support for Senate Bill 1502 and asks you to pass it out of committee.**

Respectfully,

Jackie Yerby, Director of Community Engagement

For more questions, please email Jessica Maravilla, Policy Director at jmaravilla@aclu-or.org