

Senate Committee on Rules

Testimony HB 4117, Feb. 22, 2024

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Good afternoon, Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the Committee. This testimony is in support of HB 4117.

By way of background, I'm a retired State Executive, including Executive Director of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission years ago. After retirement, I served for about 12 years on boards, including a local school Board, Clackamas Community College Board, and Board member and President of the Oregon School Boards Association. I also had the privilege of serving on Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum's Public Records Task Force in 2015-16, which provided a basis for legislative changes in 2017.

This combined experience demonstrated the need to fill in the gaps in enforcement of Oregon's public meetings laws. Over time, improvements evolved from redress through courts, to the addition of Executive Sessions to the OGEC's authority. The passage of HB 2085 in 2023 significantly expanded the duties of the OGEC to provide training, conduct investigations, make findings, and impose penalties for violations of the entirety of public meetings laws. HB 4117 would strengthen the OGEC's ability provide guidance, by authorizing it to issue advisory opinions regarding public meetings laws. The OGEC's opinions would become part of its searchable system, adding to the accessibility of the opinions by public officials and the public.

Thank you for your consideration.