



April 2, 2025

Chair Bowman
House Rules Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR. 973901

Chair Bowman and Members of the House Rules Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on HB 3638. This bill would extend the period from 30 days to one year that citizens can file a written grievance with a public body that the public body has violated executive session laws under the public meetings law. As local governments, we are sympathetic to the short period of time citizens are allowed to file a grievance under HB 2805 (2023), however, we feel that HB 3638 provides too much time to file a grievance and will likely lead to confusion because there would be two standards, one for public meetings and one for executive sessions. As a result, our organizations oppose HB 3638 as presently drafted.

Local governments strive to conduct their public meetings and executive sessions according to Oregon's Public Meetings laws found in ORS 192. In 2023, HB 2805 created a formal process by which members of the public can file a grievance with a public body asserting that the body has violated provisions of the public meetings law or executive session. This new law makes government more accountable to the public in how it conducts the people's business, and we certainly don't oppose that. However, if a citizen believes that a public body has violated the statute, that assertion should be made in a timely manner. We believe that one year is simply too much time for the public to make a public body aware that it has violated the law.

In order to avoid confusion with two different timelines, we would suggest that the bill be amended to provide up to 60 days for a citizen to file a grievance against the public body for either a public meeting or executive session violation. We would also suggest that any legislation modifying these timelines have an effective date that applies to public meetings or executive sessions occurring on or after the effective date of the act, so as to avoid the filing of grievances based on public meetings or executive sessions that took place prior to this act.

Thank you for your consideration of this input.