

Testimony in Opposition to H5523: Open meetings

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To Chair Shanley and the honorable Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee:

This bill is a nice idea, but at this point in time, would be a huge expense for state and municipal governments. If 'all public bodies' includes all house and senate committees, all city/town council and school committee meetings, planning and zoning department meetings, and municipal boards and commissions, this bill could result in unmanageable budgetary expenses. The federal American with disabilities Act already covers necessary accommodations for the hearing impaired, and the blind and visually impaired. How could a municipality afford interpreters if six or eight different language interpreters were requested at an assortment of municipal meetings? I do assume that 'a plan' to accommodate the language needs for all languages must also provide the interpreter that 'the plan' denotes. This is untenable, especially without funds contributed by the state to provide all such services.