



March 31, 2026

Dear Chair Shanley and Members, House Committee on State Government & Elections

**Re: Support for H7676**

SACRI strongly supports H7676 introduced by Representatives Speakman as a measure that would promote greater public input into government affairs. The bill amends the open meetings law to allow members of advisory bodies to attend meetings via teleconferencing. Public bodies are described as those bodies that do not have decision-making authority and whose primary purpose is to consider an issue or issues designated by the appointing authority and to provide such authority with advice or recommendations concerning the formulation of any public policy or legislation or other assigned matters.

Far too often state advisory type bodies are unable to officially meet due to lack of a quorum unless members receive a waiver from the Governor's Commission on disabilities. Also, some persons who may be interested in participating on advisory bodies hesitate to put their names forward or to accept such appointments due to concerns about having to travel to meeting locations that would be a challenge. Such concerns are particular issue for persons with transit challenges including older adults, those with mobility impairments and those who may need to leave jobs for periods of time to attend meetings. While R.I. is a small state it can still take well over 30 minutes to get from outer areas of the state to Providence or other locations where many public meetings occur. The bill includes a number of provisions to promote transparency and accountability for virtual participation including:

- Instructions on how to participate by means of videoconferencing and a valid online link (without charge) or email address where interested public can get recording of the meeting.
- Videoconference capacity so all members of public body and public can effectively communicate.
- Public members participating via videoconference will identify themselves and be considered present for purposes of a quorum and advance notice will be given of what members of the public body will participate via videoconference.
- The agenda and all documents to be discussed at an open meeting of a public body will be posted or electronically linked with agendas submitted to the Secretary of State.

As we continue to increase our virtual engagement in so many facets of life including work and school it is time to allow members of advisory-type public bodies to participate through videoconference as long as reasonable guardrails such as those called for in this bill are in place. Thank you for your consideration of SACRI's support H7676.

Sincerely,  
Carol Anne Costa, SACRI Executive Director  
Maureen Maignet, SACRI Policy Advisor