



**State of Rhode Island  
Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos**

March 31, 2026

The Hon. Evan Shanley  
Chair, House Committee on State Government and Elections  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Testimony in SUPPORT of H 7676 – An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government –  
Open Meetings**

Dear Chair Shanley:

I write today in strong support of H 7676, legislation that would modernize Rhode Island's Open Meetings Act by permitting members of advisory bodies to participate in public meetings by videoconferencing, while also requiring city and town councils and school committees to livestream their meetings beginning January 1, 2027. This bill reflects a commonsense, long-overdue update to state law that will strengthen both the effectiveness of advisory government and the accessibility of democracy to all Rhode Islanders.

In my capacity as Lieutenant Governor, I have the privilege of chairing several advisory committees that serve critical functions in state government. I write with particular urgency about one of them: the Long-Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC), which I chair and which comprises 33 members drawn from across the state, including advocates, providers, state agency representatives, and consumers of long-term care services. The LTCCC is charged with advising state government on policies affecting some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents – our elderly and disabled neighbors who depend on long-term care services.

Under current law, members of advisory bodies such as the LTCCC are prohibited from participating remotely, even in circumstances where in-person attendance is impossible. With 33 members, a simple majority – 17 individuals – must be physically present to constitute a quorum. In practice, this requirement has made it extraordinarily difficult for the LTCCC to conduct its work. Members who serve without compensation, who live across the state, and who have professional and personal obligations that may prevent in-person attendance on a given day are unable to contribute their expertise simply because they cannot be physically present. As a result, meetings have at times been unable to proceed for lack of quorum, delaying the Council's important advisory work on behalf of Rhode Island's long-term care community.

H 7676 would resolve this problem in a measured, responsible way. The bill draws a clear and sensible distinction between public bodies with decision-making authority – which remain subject to traditional in-person requirements – and advisory bodies, whose role is to inform rather than decide. For advisory

bodies like the LTCCC, the legislation would allow videoconference participation subject to robust transparency safeguards: public access to the same videoconferencing platform used by members, free of charge; effective two-way communication between all participants and the public; proper meeting notice including instructions for remote public attendance; identification of all remote participants; roll-call votes on any non-unanimous question; and recording and retention of meetings for public inspection for five years.

The bill's requirement that city and town councils and school committees provide free livestreaming of their meetings beginning January 1, 2027, and eventually provide videoconference participation opportunities for members of the public, is likewise a welcome modernization. Rhode Islanders who work multiple jobs, care for children or elderly family members, live with disabilities, or lack transportation should not be shut out of local government simply because they cannot attend in person. Livestreaming and remote public participation are not substitutes for engagement – they are gateways to it.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that government can function transparently and accountably through videoconferencing technology. H 7676 takes the lessons of that experience and codifies them in law in a thoughtful, limited way. It preserves the integrity of public decision-making while ensuring that the advisory bodies that inform those decisions can do their work effectively. I respectfully urge the Committee to report H 7676 favorably.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sabina Matos".

Sabina Matos  
Lieutenant Governor  
State of Rhode Island

CC: Rep. June Speakman