

## Jill Cataldi

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**From:** Patricia Raub <praub86@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 14, 2021 10:54 AM  
**To:** House State Government and Elections Committee  
**Subject:** Opposed to H5891A--Moving Government Meetings Online

I am strongly opposed to Moving Government Meetings Online (H5891A). While it was necessary to hold the meetings online during the height of the pandemic, there is no reason to continue to do so now that the danger of infection has diminished.

The practice of allowing public comment only orally, with no video, virtually hides the public behind a curtain, much as women or Black people were literally forced to do in times past.

When our voices are muffled: we can't have influence on the room by our very presence and visibility. We can't see officials' reactions or sense our fellow residents' reactions, we can't hold up signs to indicate our positions, we can't have conversations with the other residents who are there (and we may have no way of contacting the other people who attended), nor can we have informal conversations with lawmakers or other public officials before or after meetings..

This bill will put an unnecessary barrier between officials and the public.

We passed a law for open meetings so that official meetings and hearings are accessible to the public and enable constituents to share their views with their elected officials. Our voices are most effective when we are heard in person and are not disembodied voices. Keeping the public at arm's length sends the message that our representatives do not fully value our contributions to setting policies for our state.

We urge you to vote against this undemocratic bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Patricia Raub  
Co-Coordinator, RI Transit Riders