

RESTORE THE TRANSCRIPTION OF PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY!

Without benefit of public hearing or even public notice, the legislature has ended the transcription of public hearings. WE STRONGLY OPPOSE THIS DECISION AND URGE THAT FUNDING FOR TRANSCRIPTION BE IMMEDIATELY RESTORED.

Transparency is important. The public is entitled to know what is said at legislative public hearings.

This requires easy access. This very proposal has already been rejected by the General Assembly in the past.

Why transcription is necessary:

- The State Library has identified 750 court decisions that have cited public hearing transcripts. Their frequent use itself shows their significance.
- Public hearing testimony is critically important in proving legislative intent. It often fills the gap that speeches on the floor of the House and the Senate do not cover. Public hearings reveal the purpose behind the bill, the problem the bill is addressing, and the reasons for changes in a bill.
- Lack of access to transcripts reduce the Legislature's influence over interpretation of statutes and their intent.

Concerns about the lack of transcription:

- Audio tapes or other audio records are not a satisfactory substitute for transcripts.
 - Transcripts can be searched instantaneously.
 - Transcripts can easily be placed online.
 - Audio tapes often lack equivalent search mechanisms and can require hours of listening.
 - Having only audio files raises concerns about compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- With no official transcript, anyone using an audio file must produce his or her own original. But there is no entity for certifying accuracy, and it is predictable that in litigation there will be "dueling" transcripts with no official version.
- Filed written testimony is not a satisfactory substitute for transcripts. It omits the question-and-answer exchanges that may be critical to legislative history. Actual witness testimony sometimes varies significantly from written testimony. Committees often ask witnesses NOT to read their testimony but to tell them what is most important.
- Transcribing committee meetings is not a satisfactory substitute for transcribing public hearings. Committee meetings take place before committee members have access to OLR bill summaries and committee JF reports. Many committee meetings are cursory with meaningful discussion often taking place in caucus instead. They do not fill the key niche of public hearings, which contain broader based, more detailed, and more specific information.

WE URGE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO REINSTATE THE TRANSCRIPTION OF CRUCIAL PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY.

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