

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 24-157.

My name is Aly Belknap, and I'm the Executive Director of [Colorado Common Cause](#), a member-driven nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works for fair, honest, and accountable political representation and government.

Colorado Common Cause has been in Colorado working for open and accountable government for more than 50 years. Along with our partners, we helped pass Colorado's Sunshine Laws, which have paved the way nationally for transparency and accountability for governing bodies. The people of Colorado, no matter the ideological leaning, deeply value government transparency.

We are concerned that Senate Bill 157 will place into statute limitations on the public's access to important information about how their state government is run. Specifically, we are concerned by this bill's redefinition of public business to broadly exclude planning, process and other categorizations, and this bill's exemption written communication as a whole from Colorado Open Meetings Law.

We appreciate the tension between efficiency and transparency that our legislators experience in conducting the people's business in the 21st century. Methods of electronic communication and virtual meetings are ubiquitous, and the volume of business before the General Assembly combined with the length of our legislative session only increases the need for these tools to move the work forward effectively and efficiently. The ambiguity that has emerged around the definition of public business warrants a sound solution – and we believe that needs to be reached through further dialogue with stakeholders.

There are many situations wherein electronic communications clearly constitute a “gathering” of legislators for the purposes of discussing public business or taking formal action, such as a group message or other channel wherein information is shared and input is gathered from members. Simply categorically excluding all electronic communications from COML fails to recognize how the ways of doing public business have changed, allowing much of that work to be conducted in secret simply because it has migrated online.

We believe a workable solution can be found that does not shut the people of Colorado out of the formation of public policy in the ways that this bill proposes. We urge the General Assembly to uphold Colorado Open Meetings Law by preserving a definition of public business that includes the planning of public policy and process-oriented matters, and by ensuring its continued applicability to meetings held through electronic communications.

We urge the committee to vote no on this bill.

Thank you for considering our arguments.

Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs

02/21/2024 Upon Adjournment

SB24-157 CO Open Meetings Law for the GA

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Susan Luenser Against themselves	<p>I ask that this committee not support SB24-157.</p> <p>Coloradans spend much of their time and earnings on improving their personal and family situations. We cannot all directly participate in the state legislative process. So it is with good faith that we send elected representatives and senators to represent our common interests in realizing a safe, economically viable Colorado.</p> <p>We count on news reporters, non-profits, and private citizens to have access to all aspects of the legislative process. The proposed SB24-157 would result in less visibility of the legislative process. Why is this beneficial to Colorado citizens?</p> <p>SB24-157 does a disservice to the electorate that sends representatives to the Colorado Legislature and expects those representatives to be transparent and accountable in their legislative activities to all citizens of Colorado. What is the problem that this bill is meant to solve?</p> <p>The SB24-157 summary defines public business to include only the most visible of legislative activities and work products. Additional activities and decisions that are not "expressly defined" by the legislators themselves as being "public business" would not be subject to the same level of transparency and accountability as the most visible legislative activities and work products.</p> <p>The taxpayers of Colorado pay the salaries of our representatives and their staff, in addition to paying to keep the lights on and the doors open at the state capital. Coloradans that are busy working to pay these expenses expect and deserve a full accounting of the</p>

	representatives' communications and work products that directly or indirectly support legislation that is proposed, rejected, or passed.
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