



April 25, 2017

House Committee on Rules
Representative Jennifer Williamson, Chair
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Concerns with HB 3399

Dear Chair Williamson and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 3399. The City of Hillsboro supports the goals of increasing transparency in government but has concerns with the way this legislation seeks to achieve that important goal.

Technology has dramatically improved government transparency in many ways and some, but not all data lends itself well to tables and columns. Data that works in tables and columns can be made available for analysis and data mining tools and sites like data.gov allow public agencies to publish data for the public to review and analyze. This type of data is relatively easy to work with by using automated tools to go through millions of records in seconds or minutes.

Other types of data such as emails and word processing documents are more challenging. The content doesn't fit into neat categories or fields that can be excluded from data exports. These types of documents can be searched for key words or dates but there is no simple way to review the context or content of such documents. It is one thing to produce a list of all emails that a person sent or received in a certain time frame with a specific subject but it ultimately takes a person to review each message and decide if the content is relevant and releasable with or without some level of redaction.

Before modern information systems, fewer records existed so the review process was simple. Today, with emails, rough drafts, and final documents stored by multiple people on a single topic, it's not unusual to have hundreds if not thousands of documents that need to be reviewed by a person.

We believe HB 3399 fails to consider several realities of information systems. It attempts to force all data into a single model, which we do not believe is workable as there is not a single type of database that stores all data. A SQL database is very different than an Exchange information store and this bill applies the same rules to each. As a result, we do not believe it will improve transparency.

Due to the above reasons, we believe passage of HB 3399 will cause harm to the City of Hillsboro and government agencies across Oregon. It is our believe that companies will choose to not do business with governments either because they value their proprietary data models that they have developed and that provide them a competitive advantage or they simply won't be able to comply with the requirements because their database won't allow it. Not all data fits into neat columns that can be easily analyzed by an automated program and data specifically designed for a human, such as emails or Word documents, may never be easily reviewed and redacted by a computer.

Government transparency is critical, but we do not believe this legislation will improve access to public records. Given the complexity of the issue, we suggest the proponents of this measure work with technology experts and government agencies to find a more feasible way to increase access to public records and we would be happy to participate in those discussions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Mont". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "G" and "M".

Greg Mont, Information Services Director
City of Hillsboro