

John E O'Connor  
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RE: Support SB0747

Senator Guzzone,

I am writing to express my strong support for bills SB0747 and the cross-filed bill HB165. This legislation is essential to promote transparency and accountability within the government. It aims to provide the public with more efficient and effective services by ensuring the government is accountable for its actions, spending, and collection of taxes and fees.

This legislation has undergone a rigorous process, including several workgroups, committee hearings, and redrafting from previous legislative sessions. This indicates that it is well-vetted and has been carefully reviewed. The legislative process has ensured that the bill aligns with the interests and needs of the people it serves. It is time to get this bill passed.

I acknowledge that there may be resistance to this bill from local governments. This opposition is understandable, as the bill aims to hold locally incorporated governments accountable. Please pay attention to those that are opposing the legislation. Based on testimony from the house side, you will find that most governments that testified have not turned in their audits for several years.

It is essential to emphasize the term 'incorporated' when referring to local governments, as there is a specific reason for doing so. They are incorporated by the state just like any other small business but through a different process.

As a small business owner, the state provides yearly deadlines. These deadlines include filing business personal property returns and taxes and paying fees up to \$300.00 for each business owned. It is penalized if a business owner fails to file these returns or paperwork. The business will be labeled "Not in Good Standing" and eventually forfeited.

As a business owner, one of my responsibilities is to pay taxes to the state, county, and sometimes even municipal governments. However, I have noticed that in some regions of the state, some municipal governments have yet to submit an audit to the state in the past four years. How can we trust the system we are paying into if we cannot see what the system is doing? We can't.

The failure to submit audits can cause issues for businesses operating in those areas, leading to uncertainty and potential discrepancies in the tax system. All levels of government need to ensure transparency and accountability in their tax and fee collection processes to create a fair and efficient system for everyone involved.

As a responsible member of society, a small business owner is expected to be accountable for their actions and decisions. The same level of accountability should also be applied to the government.

No notable exception should exist, and every government should be held responsible for its actions through these audits. The failure to turn audits in is simply unacceptable, reflecting a lack of transparency, poor planning, and bad governance.

It's the government's responsibility to be accountable to its people, and any failure to do so undermines the trust and confidence of the citizens in their elected officials and the democratic system. Therefore, the government must take its role seriously and be transparent in all its actions to maintain the integrity of the system and the people's trust.

As a conscientious citizen who values the principles of democracy, I firmly believe that it is the government's responsibility to provide transparent and efficient services to the people it serves. With this in mind, I strongly urge support for this bill and its cross-filed counterpart, which will help ensure that the government is held accountable for its actions and operates in the public's best interests. By supporting these bills, you can assist in creating a more equitable and just society for all citizens.

Sincerely,  
John E O'Connor