

MARTHA R. LANG, PH.D.
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January 31, 2018

Re: H.18-0015 An act relating to the Open Meeting Law and the Public Records Act

Dear Members of the House Committee on Government Operations:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before the House Committee on Government Operations about the an act relating to the Open Meeting Law and the Public Records Act.

*Please support adding an ombudsman position to the Secretary of State's office. This person could answer questions on public records and open meeting laws that are puzzling to a person unfamiliar with the topics. This employee might also promote the freedom to know and obtain records at seminars and lectures. Just a few years ago I had no idea about public records requests and it was only last week I learnt the specifics on open meetings.

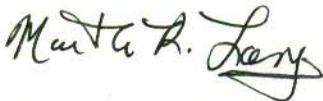
*Please support adding a mediation process in a public records request and open meeting law. Now a dispute must be taken to Vermont Superior Court. Unfortunately, that court can be very intimidating, expensive, and time consuming with only a maximum award of \$500. Perhaps if a mediator is not designated you will consider Small Claims Court as the first step to resolving a conflict.

When I send Secretary Condos an email with questions about public records he usually responds with minutes. And, his staff is always polite and cheerful when I speak with them. If they don't have the answer to my questions they direct me to the person who does.

I hope this committee will support the requests of the Secretary of State, Jim Condos. He and his staff deserve our respect and admiration.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha R. Lang". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Martha R. Lang, Ph.D.