

TOWN OF BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND

TOWN COUNCIL

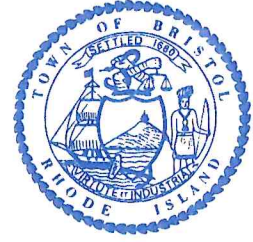
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May 15, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Rhode Island Senate
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: House Bill H7676 / Senate Bill S2612 – Open Meetings Legislation

Dear Senators,

On May 13, 2026, the Bristol Town Council held a public discussion regarding House Bill H7676 and its companion Senate Bill S2612 relating to proposed amendments to Rhode Island's Open Meetings Act. Following discussion, the Council voted 4–1 to submit this letter expressing its support for the overall goals of the legislation, while also respectfully sharing concerns regarding implementation timelines and the practical challenges municipalities may face in achieving compliance.

First and foremost, the Bristol Town Council strongly supports the principles of government transparency, public accessibility, and increased civic engagement. The Council recognizes and appreciates the intent of this legislation to expand public access to local government meetings, improve the availability of public documents, and modernize public participation opportunities. These are goals that our community values and actively works to support.

At the same time, the Council has significant concerns regarding the proposed implementation deadlines of January 2027 and January 2028. While the goals of the legislation are commendable, municipalities of varying sizes and operational capacities will be required to make substantial adjustments in a relatively short period of time.

During the Council's discussion, several implementation concerns were raised, including:

- The financial burden associated with purchasing and maintaining audio/visual equipment, software platforms, data storage, and related technology infrastructure.
- The need for dedicated staffing resources to manage livestreaming, remote public participation, troubleshooting technical issues, and maintaining orderly meeting operations.
- The training obligations for municipal staff, elected officials, appointed boards, commissions, and volunteers who will be responsible for complying with the new statutory requirements.
- The administrative challenges of expanding these requirements across multiple public bodies while maintaining consistent compliance standards.

The Council's concern is not with the policy objective, but rather with ensuring that municipalities are given a realistic opportunity to implement these new obligations successfully. Without adequate time, funding, technical guidance, and training support, there is concern that public bodies acting in good faith could inadvertently find themselves in violation of the law despite their best efforts.

Accordingly, the Bristol Town Council respectfully requests that the General Assembly consider one or more of the following:

- Establishing a statewide implementation or study committee consisting of municipal officials, technology professionals, transparency advocates, and state representatives to evaluate operational impacts and develop best practices prior to full implementation.
- Providing direct state funding, grants, or technical assistance to municipalities to support compliance.
- Allowing for an additional implementation grace period of one to two years, or a phased compliance approach, so municipalities can build the infrastructure, staffing, and training necessary to meet these new obligations successfully.

The Town of Bristol remains committed to transparency, accountability, and meaningful public access. Our request is simply that these important goals be implemented in a manner that sets municipalities up for success rather than unintentional noncompliance.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and for your continued service to the residents of Rhode Island.

Respectfully submitted,



Nathan Calouro
Bristol Town Council Chairman