



December 19, 2022

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Majority Leader

Robert Ort
Senate Minority Leader

Carl Heastie
Assembly Speaker

William Barclay
Assembly Minority Leader

Re: Passing new rules to ensure that all of your public meetings are webcast

Dear Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Heastie, Senate Minority Leader Ort, and Assembly Minority Leader Barclay:

We write to urge you to promptly pass new rules to ensure that all of your public meetings are webcast.

Due to changes in the Open Meetings Law (OML) approved by the Legislature in April, if the Senate and Assembly intend to use videoconferencing to allow your members to participate remotely in public meetings, you must adopt a one-time joint resolution after a public hearing to authorize videoconferencing.¹

¹ See the Committee on Open Government’s sample resolution and explanation of the Open Meetings Law requirements:
<https://opengovernment.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/05/chapter-56-of-the-laws-of-2022-guidance-document-05-20-22.pdf>

Legislators may participate remotely in committee meetings, floor proceedings, or public hearings, provided that a quorum of members is present in person. Under the new OML requirements, if members of the public body participate in meetings remotely, the public must also be able to view and/or participate with videoconferencing.

As you consider adopting this resolution, we also ask you to adopt the following changes, either in a resolution authorizing videoconferencing, or the Joint Rules of each house:

1. Webcast all of the Senate and Assembly's committee meetings, and make archived videos and transcripts available online. Implementing videoconferencing technology for members' use will facilitate webcasting meetings.
2. Allow the public to participate in public hearings through videoconferencing, using both internet and phone options to accommodate different levels of technology literacy and internet access.
3. Require that American Sign Language (ASL) and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) interpretation are available for all webcasts of meetings where public comment is taken, such as legislative hearings, without requiring a specific request, to ensure full accessibility for Deaf New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

Lawrence Norden
Senior Director, Elections and Government
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law

Joseph G. Rappaport
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