

TESTIMONY ON HB1349
SENATE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS COMMITTEE
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Dear Chairman Burckhard and members of the committee,

I am State Librarian Mary Soucie and I am testifying neutrally on HB1349 pertaining to public meetings. One of the core tenets of libraries is to share information and that extends to encouraging and supporting open meetings. The bill being considered before the committee includes a provision that would require a meeting link to be shared on a publicly posted agenda and we have concerns about this. When the world turned upside down last year and we switched to online meetings and online education, a phenomenon known as “Zoom-bombing” began to happen. According to Tufts University, Zoom-bombing is when a person joins a Zoom meeting and shares unwanted content through video, audio, screensharing, screen annotation, chat, or file sharing. This can happen on other videoconferencing platforms as well.

We experienced one instance of Zoom bombing at a meeting that the State Library was holding in conjunction with the State Census Advisory Committee. As quickly as I kicked one person out another would enter.

Zoom has enabled many security features that minimize this happening, but those measures are not completely failproof. In January of 2021, the American Library Association experienced Zoom bombing during their virtual Midwinter Conference; on February 24, an event to commemorate Black History Month in DC was disrupted and on March 22 a North Carolina virtual vigil to commemorate those who lost their lives in the Atlanta spa shooting was interrupted with racial slurs. The last event had shared an open link for their event.

One of the easiest ways to secure a meeting is to avoid posting an unsecured link to an online meeting. When NDSL hosts a meeting, we require attendees to register in order to receive the link. People that are participating in Zoom bombing are not taking the time to register to get the meeting link, rather they are scouring the web for unsecured links. Other security measures include limiting screen sharing, enabling a waiting room and muting attendees. Allowing a registration link on the public agenda rather than the meeting link would be one way to limit the likelihood of a disrupted meeting.

The other concern that libraries have expressed is the ability for someone to attend an online meeting without making their presence known. An individual cannot attend an in-person meeting without their

presence being known. We hope that the bill may be able to address a requirement for anyone attending a virtual meeting to make their presence known.

Chairman Burckhard and members of the committee that concludes my prepared remarks. Thank you for your time and attention. I will try to answer any questions you may have.