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Greetings House Judiciary Committee,

I write in strong opposition to both the intent and the effect of HB 2219. I have estimated the total cost for complying with a requirement to digitally record and distribute all meetings subject to the Kansas Open Meetings Act. The city of Chapman, population 1400, has a monthly council meeting, a special meeting or work session on average every two months, and 11 monthly committee or advisory board meetings. We conduct an estimated 130 meetings annually. Audio recording is relatively easy but not free. The significant cost is in the storage, management, and distribution. That requirement includes manpower. As the city administrator for our small community I will need at least one additional FTE to manage the recordings, upload, organize, label, and back up the data, and most importantly distribute. The distribution, not unlike the existing requirement to distribute the very same information, would require someone readily available who can create and distribute digital content. This is duplicitous in the extreme as our existing law already requires the city to provide the information in a timely and fairly priced manner. But the difference between printing off a copy of the meeting minutes or creating a digital version is tremendous. Everyone can make a copy. And we do. Every citizen who requests the information has no problem with accepting the format. It's on paper, a technology that does not change formats, has no incompatibility issues, and never requires an updated technology. Digital documentation will instantly result in requests for data in specific formats to match the technology of the citizen. Some will request old technology, some new, some cloud, some disc, and so on. The minutes of most meetings are one or two pages of paper. Digital documents distributed in some hard format – disc, thumb drive, etc – will require significant time, expense, and flexibility that will greatly burden my very small government staff.

In short, mandating this change, while admirable on paper, will unduly burden our local staff and budget, interfere with our ongoing efforts to produce digital content in a progressive manner, and ultimately reduce our responsiveness to all citizens for the unknown benefit of a few. Please stay out of this and let us continue to implement it as we can and as our own customer base demands.

Respectfully,


M. John Dudte, MPA
City Administrator
Chapman, Ks

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