



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the State & Local Committee Thank you for the opportunity to present my bill, LD 1629: *"An Act to Require Legislative Committees to Provide Equal Time to Each Member of the Public Who Testifies"*

Those who were here last session may remember LD 1619. I am not discussing the bill itself, but only want to speak to what I feel was the absolute disrespect shown to members of the public who waited hours to testify. Before the hearing began, members of the public were notified that they had three minutes of time in which to give their testimony and that it would be timed. All of the supporters of the bill were given the three minutes that was advertised. As the day wore on and opponents were testifying, that time was abruptly changed to two minutes. I watched as members of the public, who had taken the day off of work, driven for hours and then waited for hours, scramble to re-write their testimonies. Many people were upset. As they should be. They were being denied the opportunity to have their voices heard equally. You can imagine how others felt, when later, they were told that they would only be permitted one minute in which to testify after having already changed their testimonies from three minutes to two minutes and waiting for well over 12 hours. Once again, they scrambled to change their testimonies. This time, only being allowed to testify for 1/3 of the time that all the proponents of the bill were given and that they were told they would be given. There was no equity or equality in this building for that hearing.

It was disgraceful and should never happen again, regardless of if you are for or against a bill. It was the process that was so heinous. Is a person more important earlier in the day? Is one person's testimony more valued than another's? Do supporters of a bill deserve better treatment than those who oppose a bill? Once again, this is not about the bill, but rather the contempt and disregard that was shown to people who had driven, some of them for hours, to have their voices heard on a bill. Their voices were cut short and they were not afforded the same opportunity that others were given.

I have had constituents tell me that they are not going to waste their time again to be so readily dismissed. They were truly disenfranchised. They know they were not being listened to. They found it difficult to even attempt to make their point in a minute when

they were expecting three. This is the People's House and they were denied true and equal access that day. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that all members of the public receive equal treatment and are allowed the advertised amount of time throughout the hearing to testify. I am not attempting to change the rest of the process. Obviously, if questions are asked, one person may be testifying before the committee for a longer duration. Once again, this bill only states that all initial testimony be allotted the same amount of time as advertised throughout the hearing. I ask that you pass this bill and ensure true and equal access for all members of the public who make the effort to testify before us.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracy L. Quint". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Tracy L. Quint
State Representative