

# Amend Laws to Allow for Virtual Representation & Participation in Public Meetings

## KNOW THE FACTS

- **At least 20 states offer virtual or hybrid meeting options for public entities even when no state of emergency or disaster exists.\***
- **HCR112 of 2022 urges and requests local public bodies to provide a way for the public to participate in meetings electronically.**
  - \* **It also recognizes the benefit this option gives to the disability community.**
  - \* **Passed the House and Senate unanimously.**
- **SR147 of 2022 created the Remote Operations of Public Entities Taskforce to study the possibility of allowing for remote operations.**
  - \* **This taskforce is expected to reveal its recommendations in January or February and intend to bring legislation during the next session to address this issue.**

## What Can Legislators Do?

Amend Louisiana's Open Meetings Law to allow virtual participation of public body members and the general public when no state of emergency or disaster exists. Require official meeting notices include information regarding all available options for the public to participate.

## Why Do This?

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires all state and local bodies to provide reasonable accommodations for its meetings including the option of virtual participation.

Requiring in-person attendance is discriminatory against some people with disabilities and their families by creating undue hardships to attend and participate in in-person only meetings. It also limits their ability to serve on public bodies and creates a health risk for certain individuals. This population must be afforded the opportunity to share valuable stakeholder feedback on all issues that impact their lives.

Many members of public bodies will also benefit from virtual participation. By offering a virtual option, it will be easier to obtain and maintain a quorum. It will also help reduce travel and other associated meeting costs for public entities.

Shifting meetings to a virtual or hybrid model should be relatively simple considering most public bodies learned to navigate these accommodations and efficiently conducted business throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Technology has come a long way since Louisiana's Open Meetings Law was enacted in 1976. Now, we have the opportunity to create a more inclusive, transparent environment for all Louisianans to participate in public meetings, especially Louisianans with disabilities.

\*\*State Laws Regarding Remote Meetings When There Is No State of Emergency." *TargetHIV*, [targethiv.org/planning-chatt/state-laws-remote-meetings](https://targethiv.org/planning-chatt/state-laws-remote-meetings).