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The New Hampshire Press Association supports SB 41 as an important step towards improving public trust in law enforcement.

SB 41, which would make police disciplinary hearings open to the public, has been proposed at a time when the state is committing to increased law enforcement accountability and transparency at all levels.

Police officers have some of the broadest powers of any government employee. If a member of the state's police force is accused of abusing those powers to the point of becoming decertified, he or she has a right to hearing. The public has a compelling interest to hear the allegations against an officer and his or her defense.

SB 41 does not guarantee these hearings to be completely open and allows portions to be closed to the public for good reason, but sets openness as the default, which is the bedrock of the state's right to know law.

As this committee considers this and other proposals to alter RSA-91:A, we urge you to be guided by the spirit and letter of the law itself, which is to "to ensure both the greatest possible public access to the actions, discussions and records of all public bodies, and their accountability to the people."

The New Hampshire Press Association urges this committee and all lawmakers to endorse any bill that expands openness and provides for the "greatest possible public access" and strike down any bill that limits public transparency.

It is in everyone's interest to keep New Hampshire open and transparent.

New Hampshire Press Association

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