


Testimony for Assembly Committee Hearing A4045 and Senate committee hearing S2930,

BHCW TEAM <team@bhcw.io>

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 1 attachments (29 KB)

OPRA- Petition - Google Sheets.pdf;

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is John Migueis, and I administer Berkeley Heights Community Watch - a website dedicated to informing Berkeley Heights NJ Residents about their local Government.

If Bills S2930/A4505 had been in place over the past four years, the residents in our community would not have had access to the full school budget for our District or the costs associated with attorneys that have skyrocketed as a result of BOE ethics complaints.

Residents would not have known that our 2023 School Budget was approved without all BOE members having looked at it.

Through OPRA, emails between BOE Members have exposed how the former majority improperly used Attorneys to prevent newly elected BOE Members from voting on important issues.

OPRA allowed residents to understand how the administration attempted to influence elections improperly.

This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Based on the information obtained through OPRA, four new BOE Members were elected in three years. Our Superintendent has resigned effective May 2024.

The remnants of this majority are still actively working to hide and maneuver in incomprehensible ways to any thinking person today.

As it stands, our District **still** spends an excessive amount of time and money on Attorneys so that documents requested through OPRA are improperly redacted or denied, leading to suits that the District ends up settling at the last minute in an apparent attempt to delay information.

In one case, a BOE Member outright lied to a resident about the existence of a report connected to our proficiency declines during a BOE Meeting. Initially, the OPRA Custodian also denied it existed. Due to the force of the **current** law itself, we were able to obtain it.

Imagine what would happen in our community if these bills became law.

Imagine what would happen to communities around the state.

If passed, these bills would be a catastrophe for our community. The District already hides information most Districts make public, delays responses to requests, and uses attorneys to interfere with straightforward requests.

In fact, this very process and how these two bills are being rushed through are evidence that both OPRA and OPMA should be strengthened.

I attached a petition with 90 signatures (some signatures have been removed as they were out of state). The number may have increased since I sent this email. Most of these signatures are from residents of Berkeley Heights; however, other residents from around the state have also signed. You can view the online petition [here](#)

The actual signatures are below.

Berkeley Heights Town Council Member Paul Donnelly and BOE Representatives Dr. Forgger, Sai Akiri, Dipti Khanna, and Natasha Joly are represented on this petition.

Here is a link to all of the articles over the past 2+ years published by BHCW that were made possible by OPRA: <https://bhcommunitywatch.com/tag/opradoc/>

Here are a few video clips on the circus:

Video on the Berkeley Heights Proficiency Controversy:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o77ZI0pV1Oo>

Video on the Berkeley Heights Transportation Controversy:
<https://youtu.be/wnUZ1R7IBXE?si=92jXUO8-wnqmPBDG>

Video on the Berkeley Heights BOE Policy Violations:
https://youtu.be/ks2loaDGnSg?si=5S3u2Q_iVr79kubH

Video on how our Lawyers (Cleary Jacobbe Alfieri Jacobs - the same Firm our District is paying to unnecessarily delay and redact OPRA requests) are colluding with BOE Members during Meetings to protect their jobs (I'm pretty sure they've donated to some of your campaigns):
<https://youtu.be/fUfqMWRvius?si=NclNMG47ABwoYqOf>

Could you imagine what things would be like in our community if the legislation was passed and they received further protection in hiding their actions?

Please throw these bills out - they are a direct assault on Democracy, and you all know it.

Regards,
John Migueis

[REDACTED]
Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922
[REDACTED]

Berkeley Heights Community Watch

Attached: Petition List

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[Berkeley Heights Community Watch](#)



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