



To members of the Sunshine Committee:

My name is Rob Davis, and I am an investigative reporter covering the environment on The Oregonian's investigations team. I regret that I cannot be in Salem to share this testimony with you today but I wanted to convey the vital public interest that lies in the continued disclosure of personally identifiable information in Oregon public records.

When nearly two dozen Curry County residents were sprayed with herbicides from a timber helicopter flying over their neighborhood in 2013, personal information was essential for connecting the dots.

Residents had complained before. But without personally identifying details contained in state Agriculture Department investigation narratives, Oregonians may never have known what they experienced. Had phone numbers and addresses been redacted or not collected, it would've made finding the affected residents far more difficult if not impossible.

The result of that disclosure: A bright light was shined on the state's botched investigations into years of complaints from Coast Range residents harmed by exposure to toxic chemicals.

When Oregonians complain to the Department of Environmental Quality about polluters that fill neighborhoods with noxious chemicals, complainants provide their name, phone number and address. These details have been essential for my reporting, allowing me to find dozens of people affected by pollution problems across the state.

In circumstances in which a complainant does not wish for their address to be disclosed – often in neighbor vs. neighbor disputes but also when a plant employee fears workplace retribution – the department already has a process by which the information can be held in confidence.

Personally identifiable information is one of the essential building blocks of disclosures made under Oregon's Public Records Law. I urge the committee to reject any further limits on its disclosure.

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