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Good Afternoon. Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I would like to testify in support of SB 145, An Act Concerning Municipal Lobbying and HB 7000, An Act Concerning Municipal Ethics and Municipal Lobbying.

Recent events in our cities clearly illustrate the need for ethics requirements in municipal government. The SB 145 would place certain disclosure and filing requirements on those who lobby local government. This legislation would require these lobbyists to register and file financial statements regarding their arrangements with clients at the Office of State Ethics. These requirements would make public the names, contributions, and clients of those who seek to influence local government. The requirements would be similar to the requirements on lobbyists at the state level.

Disclosure and public knowledge can go far to discourage corruption. This legislation would enhance public confidence and reduce the possibility that undue influence due to financial support of campaigns would remain undetected. Simple disclosure can be a strong deterrent to ethically questionable behavior.

Additionally, HB 7000 would require that each municipality pass a municipal code of ethics with certain standardized requirements. The municipalities would be free to pass ethics codes with a more demanding ethical standard. Requiring municipalities to have a code of ethics is a sensible and logical step to prevent municipal corruption. The law and the consequences for violating it must be clear both as deterrent and prevention. The requirements for the municipal code of ethics would be similar to the code of ethics for state officials. The code should include a ban on receiving gifts, defines and prohibits activities by municipal office holders and employees that are conflicts of interest, and prevents municipal office holders and employees from using municipal property for personal gain. It also makes clear that municipal office holders and employees shall not engage in political activities during hours for which that person is being paid by the municipality. These common sense reforms would improve the efficiency of and trust in municipal government and I urge you to pass this legislation.