

April 20, 2021
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Cassie Steiner, Senior Campaign Coordinator, Sierra Club - Wisconsin Chapter
cassandra.steiner@sierraclub.org, (262) 930 3963

64 Organizations call on Joint Finance Committee to expand virtual public hearing opportunities

MADISON - In response to the virtual public hearing on the Wisconsin state budget reaching capacity within 15 minutes of when registration opened, the Sierra Club - Wisconsin Chapter and 63 other organizations sent a letter (attached) to the Joint Finance Committee urging them to add two additional virtual public hearings.

"The April 28 virtual public hearing attendance, limited to 200 attendees statewide, filled up within 15 minutes of opening. This demonstrates the desire of Wisconsinites to provide verbal input in this important process and the need for additional virtual hearings," the letter states.

The letter follows a [February](#) request from over 100 organizations for virtual public input opportunities, which highlighted the importance of public input and engagement in this process, including virtual opportunities given the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The fact that registration filled so quickly shows that people were overwhelmingly interested in attending the virtual hearing, and no doubt, many were turned away from being a part of this process," said Molly Collins, advocacy director of the ACLU of Wisconsin. "That's unacceptable. The budget process should be a reflection of the values and needs of Wisconsinites, but how can it be if Wisconsinites were turned away from the process?"

"Whether it's a decision about water being safe to drink, air safe to breathe, or access to jobs, the State Budget impacts every Wisconsinite's health, well-being, and livelihood" stated Elizabeth Ward, Sierra Club Wisconsin Director, "It is wrong for the legislature to arbitrarily take away the ability for people to speak about the impacts of the enormous decisions they're making."

The 64 organizations who submitted the letter are requesting two additional virtual public hearings to provide a similar quantity of virtual hearing opportunities to in-person public hearings.

###