

**Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MNCOGI)**  
**Written Testimony of Matt Ehling, MNCOGI board member**  
**HF 1078 DE, Line 74.12**  
**April 7, 2021**

Dear members of the House Public Safety Committee,

The Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MNCOGI) opposes the proposed change on line 74.12 of HF 1078. The proposed change would close formerly public hearings under Minn. Stat. § 260B.163 that pertain to certain delinquency proceedings involving juveniles that also relate to alleged or proven felony-level criminal conduct.

MNCOGI opposes the change, as we believe that the public needs to be able to observe governmental activity and operations to the greatest extent possible. Our organization exists to ensure that this principle is recognized in the creation and promulgation of rules and laws guiding government operations in the state of Minnesota.

At the legislature, for instance, we watch for bills that create new governmental entities, and work to ensure that those entities are covered by Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. We also actively watch for legislation that would roll-back existing public access — such as the provision at issue in Minn. Stat. § 206B.163 — and work to oppose such changes.

In recent years, there has been much debate over how various aspects of the criminal justice system function. As with all other debates about matters involving governmental operations, our organization believes that public access to information about those operations - including public access to judicial hearings - serves an important and critical role. Information is key to any informed debate, and that is why we continue to stress public access to governmental information - including information that can be gleaned from watching governmental processes such as court hearings.

For these reasons, we oppose closing public access to certain juvenile court proceedings as proposed by HF 1078 DE, line 74.12

Sincerely,

Matt Ehling  
MNCOGI board member