

§434. Review of proposed exceptions to public records; accessibility of public records

1. Procedures before legislative committees. Whenever a legislative measure containing a new public records exception is proposed or a change that affects the accessibility of a public record is proposed, the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over the proposal shall hold a public hearing and determine the level of support for the proposal among the members of the committee. If there is support for the proposal among a majority of the members of the committee, the committee shall request the review committee to review and evaluate the proposal pursuant to subsection 2 and to report back to the committee of jurisdiction. A proposed exception or proposed change that affects the accessibility of a public record may not be enacted into law unless review and evaluation pursuant to subsections 2 and 2-B have been completed.

[PL 2011, c. 320, Pt. D, §3 (AMD).]

2. Review and evaluation. Upon referral of a proposed public records exception from the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over the proposal, the review committee shall conduct a review and evaluation of the proposal and shall report in a timely manner to the committee to which the proposal was referred. The review committee shall use the following criteria to determine whether the proposed exception should be enacted:

A. Whether a record protected by the proposed exception needs to be collected and maintained; [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

B. The value to the agency or official or to the public in maintaining a record protected by the proposed exception; [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

C. Whether federal law requires a record covered by the proposed exception to be confidential; [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

D. Whether the proposed exception protects an individual's privacy interest and, if so, whether that interest substantially outweighs the public interest in the disclosure of records; [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

E. Whether public disclosure puts a business at a competitive disadvantage and, if so, whether that business's interest substantially outweighs the public interest in the disclosure of records; [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

F. Whether public disclosure compromises the position of a public body in negotiations and, if so, whether that public body's interest substantially outweighs the public interest in the disclosure of records; [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

G. Whether public disclosure jeopardizes the safety of a member of the public or the public in general and, if so, whether that safety interest substantially outweighs the public interest in the disclosure of records; [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

G-1. Whether public access to the record ensures or would ensure that members of the public are able to make informed health and safety decisions; [PL 2021, c. 313, §9 (NEW).]

H. Whether the proposed exception is as narrowly tailored as possible; and [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

I. Any other criteria that assist the review committee in determining the value of the proposed exception as compared to the public's interest in the record protected by the proposed exception. [PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 313, §9 (AMD).]

2-A. Accountability review of agency or official. In evaluating each proposed public records exception, the review committee shall, in addition to applying the criteria of subsection 2, determine whether there is a publicly accountable entity that has authority to review the agency or official that

collects, maintains or uses the record subject to the exception in order to ensure that information collection, maintenance and use are consistent with the purpose of the exception and that public access to public records is not hindered.

[PL 2005, c. 631, §6 (NEW).]

2-B. Accessibility of public records. In reviewing and evaluating whether a proposal may affect the accessibility of a public record, the review committee may consider any factors that affect the accessibility of public records, including but not limited to fees, request procedures and timeliness of responses.

[PL 2011, c. 320, Pt. D, §3 (NEW).]

3. Report. The review committee shall report its findings and recommendations on whether the proposed exception or proposed limitation on accessibility should be enacted to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over the proposal.

[PL 2011, c. 320, Pt. D, §3 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2003, c. 709, §3 (NEW). PL 2005, c. 631, §6 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 320, Pt. D, §3 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 313, §9 (AMD).

The State of Maine claims a copyright in its codified statutes. If you intend to republish this material, we require that you include the following disclaimer in your publication:

All copyrights and other rights to statutory text are reserved by the State of Maine. The text included in this publication reflects changes made through the Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature and is current through October 15, 2024. The text is subject to change without notice. It is a version that has not been officially certified by the Secretary of State. Refer to the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated and supplements for certified text.

The Office of the Revisor of Statutes also requests that you send us one copy of any statutory publication you may produce. Our goal is not to restrict publishing activity, but to keep track of who is publishing what, to identify any needless duplication and to preserve the State's copyright rights.

PLEASE NOTE: The Revisor's Office cannot perform research for or provide legal advice or interpretation of Maine law to the public. If you need legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.