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Good morning. My name is Marie Dillon and I'm the policy director for the Better Government Association here in Chicago.

I want to thank you for inviting me and my fellow good government advocates to participate in this process.

This is a sobering moment for Illinois. Yet again, a federal investigation has caused the people of this state to recoil at the actions of their elected representatives. Your charge is to come up with a plan to restore the public faith in government.

We are happy to help.

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I understand that the subject of today's hearing is the Lobbyist Registration Act and the regulation of lobbyists. And while I'll do my best to recommend constructive changes, I have to confess that I'm not especially worried about deficiencies of the Lobbyist Registration Act.

I know "lobbyist" is a key word if you want to Google the U.S. Attorney's unfolding investigation. But the challenge facing this commission, and this state, should not be framed as a lobbyist problem.

The lobbyists who are players in this scandal aren't rank and file lobbyists. They're elected officials moonlighting as lobbyists. Or they're shadow lobbyists, hired by people who expect something from the General Assembly in return.

The problem isn't lobbyists. The problem is the transactional relationship between special interests and the people who write our laws and set our government policies.

That's what is poisoning the trust of the people of Illinois. That's what your work is about.

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I appreciate what Rep. Harris has said: The things that have attracted the attention of federal prosecutors are already crimes. They have crossed a bright line.

I also appreciate that most members of the General Assembly are honest and dedicated public servants.

But Illinois has always had more than its share of bad actors. Our state is known for corruption — not just for elected officials sent to prison, but for jaw-dropping ethical breaches for which our laws look the other way.

When the federal investigation is over, I predict a lot of bad actors will be exposed, but untouched. Because tolerance for self-dealing behavior is baked into our laws. That's the big picture here.

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Having said that, I'm happy to share a few thoughts about the Lobbyist Registration Act and the regulation of lobbyists.

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With regard to lobbying in general, transparency should be a priority. The purpose of disclosure is to help the public understand who is seeking to influence official decisions and how much is being spent to do so.

For this reason, I believe lobbyists should disclose their compensation. This is required at the federal level and is a fairly common requirement among states. I'm still looking for my favorite model, one that links dollars to issues in a meaningful way.

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SB 1639, passed in the veto session, contains some good transparency provisions, including disclosure of contract lobbyists' clients and requiring the Secretary of State to

maintain a searchable public database that combines lobbyists' disclosure and contributions with public officials' statements of economic interest.

It also requires lobbyists to disclose any elected or appointed public office they hold. This is an instance when disclosure is not enough.

The public interest is not served when elected officials from one government have side jobs lobbying other governments. There are inherent conflicts of interest. A local government body being lobbied by a state lawmaker can't help but worry about whatever business it might have pending with the General Assembly. And the lawmaker's judgement can be compromised when that same client has business with the state legislature. These conflicts don't have to rise to the level of bribery to be a problem.

The city of Chicago recently passed an ordinance prohibiting city officials from lobbying other governments, and vice versa. That is a good model for the General Assembly and for the entire state.

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Finally, let's talk about revolving door provisions.

I don't have to tell you that lobbying is a tempting career move for many lawmakers. I understand the pay is better. But there are conflicts of interest before and after that step unless there is a mandatory cooling-off period in between.

Illinois has no such requirement. Most other states do. The norm seems to be about two years, but Florida will require a six-year cooling-off period effective Dec. 31, 2022.

Adopting a revolving-door provision would give taxpayers confidence that their elected representative is acting in their interest, not in the interest of a future employer or client.

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I'm happy to answer any questions to the best of my knowledge and will continue to study and offer solutions toward a more ethical Illinois.

Thank you