

Public Comment Bylaws

In accordance with Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law (Chapter 286, Florida Statutes) and Robert's Rules of Order, public comment is a vital element of open government. The Early Learning Coalition of Orange County welcomes input from the public to promote transparency and inform the effective administration of its responsibilities. Each meeting includes a designated time for public comment, and the following guidelines apply:

- **Public Comment Timing:** The public comment period will be held at the end of the business meeting and is limited to thirty (30) minutes.
- **Speaker Registration:** All speakers must register in person prior to the start of the public comment period. Registrations cannot be made through Board members or staff. Once the Chair calls for the Public Comment, no additional registrations will be accepted.
- **Eligibility and Format:**
 - Only individuals who are physically present may provide comment. Phone, virtual (Microsoft Teams, or Zoom,), written, or proxy submissions will not be accepted.
 - All comments, questions, and statements must be delivered from the podium.
 - Each speaker must identify themselves and state the subject of their comments before speaking.
 - Each speaker is allotted up to three (3) minutes. Time limits will be strictly enforced and may not be yielded or transferred to others.
 - If a speaker represents a group, they may speak on behalf of that group if authorized and acknowledged as such.
- **Content and Conduct:**
 - Comments must relate to matters within the official business or jurisdiction of the Early learning Coalition of Orange County. Off-topic, redundant, or operational complaints outside the Board's policymaking role may be ruled out of order by the Chairperson.
 - All remarks must be addressed to the Chairperson, comments cannot be addressed to individual board members, staff, or members of the audience.
 - Public comment is not a forum for debate. Board members will not engage in discussion unless recognized by the Chairperson for clarification or follow-up.
 - Lack of response does not imply agreement or disagreement.
 - Civility and decorum are required. Personal attacks; profane, harassing, defamatory, threatening, or discriminatory language; or disruptive conduct will not be tolerated. Violations may result in the loss of speaking privileges or removal from the meeting.
 - Disruptions of any kind during Public Comment period, including applause, outbursts, or interruptions, are not permitted and may result in removal from the meeting pursuant to §286.0114(4)(c), Florida Statutes.

- Chair Discretion: The Chairperson retains the right to interrupt, suspend, or terminate the public comment period at any time if the proceedings become disorderly, disruptive, or hostile, to preserve the safety and decorum of the meeting.
- Technology Etiquette: Cell phones must be set to silent mode. Personal phone conversations are not permitted during the meeting.
- Recording and Public Record: This meeting is recorded. By speaking, you acknowledge that your comments become part of the official public record in accordance with Florida's public records laws.
- Free Speech Acknowledgment: These procedures are not intended to restrict the content of comments, whether positive, negative, or neutral, on matters properly before the Board.