

SENATOR JEFF WALDSTREICHER
Legislative District 18
Montgomery County

—
Vice Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee

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Joint Committee on Federal Relations



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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Jeff Waldstreicher
Senate Bill 157 – Municipalities – Charter Amendments – Notice

February 7, 2023

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan & Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Senate Bill 157 deals with an issue that most of us are familiar with. As many of you know, our municipal corporations need to provide certain notices in newspapers of record. This is an issue the General Assembly has been grappling with for many years as smaller newspapers in our communities have shuttered. These papers include the Montgomery County Sentinel and the Gazette.

Today, our municipalities must turn to larger newspapers – such as the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun – to place their notices. This presents a couple of problems. First, very few people continue to receive physical newspapers, so these notices are not being seen. Second, as a result of their increased market share, these larger newspapers enjoy local monopolies over these legally mandated notices.

The General Assembly has considered past legislative proposals to move these notices online. The problem with these proposals – which I support in part – is that not everyone has access to the Internet. The digital divide could accidentally leave our most vulnerable citizens without access to information about the municipalities in which they reside. That’s why I worked with my local municipalities and the Maryland Municipal League to come up with a solution to our diminishing local newspapers.

Senate Bill 173 offers a straightforward remedy. If a municipality is considering a charter amendment, they can simply mail notification of that amendment to all their residents. They can also include it in a newsletter so long as the newsletter is mailed to all residents of the municipality. Senate Bill 173 would allow for personal delivery, as well.

This bill is a thoughtful, effective way for smaller municipalities to keep their resident apprised of charter amendments. I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Waldstreicher".

Senator Jeff Waldstreicher