



**Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association**

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To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: January 17, 2024

**Re: SB170 - OPPOSE**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of newspaper publications, from large metro dailies such as the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as the Star Democrat and Maryland Independent, to publications such as The Daily Record, Baltimore Jewish Times, and online-only publications such as the Baltimore Banner, MoCo 360, Maryland Matters and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association urges the Committee to reject SB 170. This bill would allow a notice of a hearing regarding the siting of a school to be posted in a newspaper of general circulation OR on a website of the local school system. We ask that the proposed language in 4-116. (b) (2) be changed from OR POSTED ELECTRONICALLY to AND POSTED ELECTRONICALLY.

The site for a new school is of paramount importance to a community. When a hearing is to be held, there should be full and appropriate notice to the public. As this bill is currently written, members of the public would have to check the school board website on spec to see if any information has been posted, rather than in the customary place of their local newspaper, which has published notices from across the community. By fracturing the required postings to allow them in two different places, the onus is now on the members of the public to continuously search through multiple places to find items that will affect their community.

This situation can be remedied by changing OR to AND. More notice is better notice, and news publications have a far wider audience reach than school system websites. Moreover, in a recent regional readership survey, respondents overwhelmingly (67% of respondents) wanted notices to be in local newspapers and their websites.

Public notices should be independent, accessible, verifiable, and reach the widest possible audience to ensure trust in the process and information. This bill is bad public policy and will short change the public's right to know.

Local government has a vested interest in ensuring that the public knows about new laws, among other topics, and that means publicizing to the largest possible audience. This bill allows the fracturing of notice location and potentially takes those notices out of the newspaper and its website (and its archive) and into a specific government website. The public looks for this type of information among other news and information, not in a website where the information is only available for a short period of time and does not reach a broad cross section of the public. We urge an unfavorable report.



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