

# COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

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COUNTY ATTORNEY

February 6, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 594 Entitled "Legal Advertisement or Legal Notice-Publication in Newspaper or Newspaper in General Circulation-Digital Newspapers"**

Dear Delegate Pena-Melnyk, Chair and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Dorchester County Council, I respectfully offer its support for House Bill 594 entitled "Legal Advertisement or Legal Notice-Publication in Newspaper or Newspaper in General Circulation-Digital Newspapers" which will alter the meaning of "newspaper" or "newspaper in general circulation" when referring to the publication of a certain legal advertisement or legal notice to include certain publications that are offered in a print format or a digital format under certain circumstances; and generally relating to the publication of legal advertisements and legal notices.

The Dorchester Banner and The Star Democrat are the only two news publications in Dorchester County which qualify under Section 1-113 of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland as a "newspaper of general circulation." The Dorchester Banner only publishes and distributes a newspaper on Wednesdays. The Monday and Tuesday editions of The Star Democrat are online only. This news publication publishes and distributes a newspaper on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday (which is labeled "Friday/Saturday"), and Sunday.

The County Council is concerned that if these publications move to an online format they will be unable to conduct business until legislative relief can be obtained, at the detriment of Dorchester County citizens. This is particularly troubling since due to COVID-19 the Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session was cut short. If such an event were to occur close to the same time as these news publications shift to online only, there may be a substantial delay.

Additionally, if the Dorchester Banner were to change its print edition publication date from Wednesday to any other day of the week, due to advertising requirements pursuant to the County's Code, we will be unable to utilize this publication in print format or in an online format since that option is not currently available pursuant to State law.

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We ask that you look favorably upon House Bill 594. Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter of support. Please contact the Council's Office at (410) 228-1700 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

DORCHESTER COUNTY COUNCIL

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George L. Pfeffer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

George L. Pfeffer  
President

jln/dl

cc: The Honorable Johnny Mautz, Senator  
The Honorable Thomas S. Hutchinson, Delegate  
The Honorable Christopher T. Adams, Delegate  
The Honorable Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate