

# HOUSE BILL 51

C2

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(PRE-FILED)

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By: **Delegates Lehman, Bagnall, Fair, Foley, Ruth, Solomon, and Terrasa**

Requested: September 19, 2024

Introduced and read first time: January 8, 2025

Assigned to: Economic Matters

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Business Regulation – Sale of Local News Organizations – Required Notice**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring a local news organization, at least a certain number of days  
4 before the organization is sold, to provide written notice of the sale to certain  
5 employees, the Maryland Department of Labor, the governing body of the county  
6 where the local news organization is located, and certain nonprofit entities;  
7 prohibiting the sale of a local news organization unless the written notice is provided;  
8 and generally relating to the sale of local news organizations.

9 BY adding to

10 Article – Business Regulation  
11 Section 19–108  
12 Annotated Code of Maryland  
13 (2024 Replacement Volume)

14 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
15 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

16 **Article – Business Regulation**

17 **19–108.**

18 **(A) IN THIS SECTION, “LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATION” MEANS AN**  
19 **ORGANIZATION THAT:**

20 **(1) ENGAGES PROFESSIONALS TO CREATE, EDIT, PRODUCE, AND**  
21 **DISTRIBUTE ORIGINAL CONTENT CONCERNING MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**  
22 **THROUGH REPORTING ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS,**

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 OBSERVING CURRENT EVENTS, AND ANALYZING DOCUMENTS OR OTHER  
2 INFORMATION;

3 (2) EMPLOYS AT LEAST ONE FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE FOR AT LEAST 30  
4 HOURS EACH WEEK WHO:

5 (I) PROVIDES COVERAGE OF STATE OR LOCAL COMMUNITY  
6 NEWS;

7 (II) RESIDES WITHIN 50 MILES OF THE COVERAGE AREA; AND

8 (III) GATHERS, PREPARES, COLLECTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, WRITES,  
9 EDITS, REPORTS, OR PUBLISHES ORIGINAL STATE OR LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWS FOR  
10 DISSEMINATION TO THE STATE OR LOCAL COMMUNITY; AND

11 (3) DISCLOSES IN ITS PRINT PUBLICATION OR ON ITS WEBSITE THE  
12 BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP OF THE ENTITY OR, IN THE CASE OF A NONPROFIT, ITS  
13 BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

14 (B) (1) THIS SECTION APPLIES ONLY TO A LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATION  
15 THAT:

16 (I) IF THE ORGANIZATION PUBLISHES ONLY A PRINT  
17 PUBLICATION:

18 1. HAS PUBLISHED AT LEAST ONE PRINT PUBLICATION  
19 OVER THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS; AND

20 2. A. MAINTAINS A VALID UNITED STATES POSTAL  
21 SERVICE PERIODICAL PERMIT; OR

22 B. DEDICATES AT LEAST 25% OF THE ORGANIZATION'S  
23 CONTENT TO LOCAL NEWS;

24 (II) IF THE ORGANIZATION PUBLISHES DIGITAL-ONLY  
25 CONTENT:

26 1. HAS PUBLISHED AT LEAST ONE PIECE ABOUT THE  
27 STATE OR A LOCAL COMMUNITY EACH WEEK DURING THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS;  
28 AND

1                   **2. AT LEAST 33% OF THE ORGANIZATION'S DIGITAL**  
2 **AUDIENCE, ON AVERAGE OVER THE PREVIOUS 12-MONTH PERIOD, IS LOCATED IN**  
3 **THE STATE;**

4                   **(III) IF THE ORGANIZATION PUBLISHES PRINT AND DIGITAL**  
5 **CONTENT, SATISFIES THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER ITEM (I) OR (II) OF THIS**  
6 **PARAGRAPH; AND**

7                   **(IV) IS EXEMPT FROM TAXATION UNDER § 501(C)(3) OF THE**  
8 **INTERNAL REVENUE CODE AND IN ITS FILINGS WITH THE INTERNAL REVENUE**  
9 **SERVICE STATES THAT THE MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION IS TO COVER STATE OR**  
10 **LOCAL NEWS.**

11                   **(2) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO A LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATION**  
12 **THAT RECEIVED FOR THE PREVIOUS YEAR AT LEAST 50% OF ITS GROSS RECEIPTS**  
13 **FROM:**

14                   **(I) A POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE OR OTHER ENTITY**  
15 **DESCRIBED IN § 527 OF THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE; OR**

16                   **(II) AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS EXEMPT FROM TAXATION**  
17 **UNDER § 501(C)(4) OR (6) OF THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE.**

18                   **(C) (1) AT LEAST 120 DAYS BEFORE THE SALE OF A LOCAL NEWS**  
19 **ORGANIZATION, THE LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATION SHALL PROVIDE WRITTEN NOTICE**  
20 **TO:**

21                   **(I) EMPLOYEES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES THAT**  
22 **WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE SALE;**

23                   **(II) THE DEPARTMENT AND THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE**  
24 **COUNTY WHERE THE LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATION IS LOCATED; AND**

25                   **(III) ANY NONPROFIT IN THE STATE THAT IS IN THE BUSINESS OF**  
26 **BUYING LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS.**

27                   **(2) THE SALE OF A LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATION MAY NOT BE**  
28 **COMPLETED UNLESS THE WRITTEN NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF**  
29 **THIS SUBSECTION IS PROVIDED.**

30                   SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
31 October 1, 2025.