

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 74  
Judiciary

(Delegate Foley)

---

**Legal Advertisement or Legal Notice - Publication in Newspaper or Newspaper  
in General Circulation - Digital Newspapers**

---

This bill establishes that if a law, resolution, or court order, judgement, or decree requires a county or municipal corporation to publish a legal advertisement or legal notice (1) any required advertisement or notice must be published and distributed through print and digital format; (2) the time period required for publication starts once the first advertisement or notice appears in print or digital format; and (3) if there is no print and digital publication that meets specified qualifications, the advertisement or notice may be placed in any digital publication that can be accessed locally and that regularly contains local news and information, as specified. The bill also requires any digital publication that publishes a legal advertisement or legal notice to (1) maintain an archive of all published legal advertisements and legal notices that must be available to the public and (2) employ at least one employee whose duties include reporting, writing, or editing local news and information.

---

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. The bill relates only to local governments.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

---

## Analysis

### Current Law:

#### *Newspapers and Legal Advertisement Requirements – Generally*

Unless otherwise specified, “newspaper” or “newspaper in general circulation” mean a publication that (1) has at least four pages; (2) habitually contains news items, reports of current events, editorial comments, advertising matter, and other miscellaneous information that is of public interest and is found generally in an ordinary newspaper; (3) has been published and distributed, by sale, from an established place of business at least once a week for six months or more before publication of the advertisement or notice; (4) has general circulation throughout the community where the publication is published; and (5) qualifies for periodicals rates for mailing through the United States Postal Service.

*Broadly*, legal advertisements and legal notices must be published in newspapers to give sufficient notice of specified government and public activities of interest to the general public. Legal advertisements and legal notices include, among other things, the appointment and election of government officials, specified judicial activity and judgements, business entity and real property actions, meetings and decisions of government bodies, and other specified occurrences and events as required under current law.

#### *County-specific Provisions*

In Prince George’s County, “newspaper in general circulation” includes a newspaper that (1) is designated by the county council as a newspaper of record or (2) meets specified criteria with respect to the county and is published by a small business.

Chapter 688 of 2024 established that, in Dorchester County only, if a law, resolution, or court order, judgement, or decree requires the county to publish a legal advertisement or legal notice (1) any required advertisement or notice must be published and distributed through print and digital format; (2) the time period required for publication starts once the first advertisement or notice appears in print or digital format; and (3) if there is no print and digital publication that meets specified qualifications, the advertisement or notice may be placed in any digital publication that can be accessed in the county and that regularly contains local news and information for the county.

**Small Business Effect:** Any small businesses that operate print newspapers may experience decreased advertising revenue under the bill. Conversely, any small businesses that operate a digital platform may experience increased advertising revenue under the bill,

though any increased revenue may be offset by the requirement that they must hire a reporter to cover local news if they do not already do so.

---

### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Dorchester, Garrett, and Prince George's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; City of Laurel; Maryland Municipal League; Town of La Plata; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 20, 2025  
km/mcr

---

Analysis by: Thomas S. Elder

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510