



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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To: Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

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Re: **SB 368 - 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 Frederick News Post and Hagerstown Herald-Mail to publications such as The Daily Record, Baltimore Jewish Times, and online-only publications such as Bethesda Beat, MarylandReporter.com and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association urges the Committee to reject SB368 as written as because it further fractures the ability of residents to see government notices in a widely available format. The bill would allow municipalities to provide notice of a proposed charter amendment to be served through a newspaper of general circulation OR by mail or hand delivery to every residence in the community. The bill goes further by allowing notice to be served by including a "fair summary" in a "newsletter or any other regular municipal publication." This is an attempt to pull notice of proposed changes to a municipality's charter, which is a substantial government action, out of widely-read, independent community publications and into a government newsletter.

The purpose of public notice is to prevent official actions from occurring in secret. Since the first session of the U.S. Congress in 1789, public notice has supported the principles of democracy, transparency and open government. Best practices for public notice include stipulations that the notices be **published independently of government**, in the context of other news of interest to the community, and in an archivable and verifiable format. I've included a booklet, "Public Notice: An American Tradition," that outlines effective public notice, and why it is so important.

We urge an unfavorable report.



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