



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

P.O. Box 26214 | Baltimore, MD 21210

443-768-3281 | rsnyder@mddcpres.com

www.mddcpres.com

To: Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 28, 2023

Re: SB 520 - 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 Bethesda Beat, MarylandReporter.com and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association urges the Committee to reject SB 520. This is a **state-wide bill** that would require passed local legislation (or a fair summary) be published in a newspaper for three weeks OR be posted physically on an official bulletin board OR on a website used by the county commissioners to provide information to the public. Further, the bill stipulates that the passed legislation only need stay on the government website for four weeks. This would be a change from current practice, where passed legislation is published in a newspaper of general circulation once a week for three weeks.

More notice is better notice. The bill could be improved by changing OR to AND on page three, line 21. As written, this statewide bill would push critical information out of newspapers and their websites in favor of a significantly smaller reach county website or an even smaller reach bulletin board. 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 takes notice of new laws 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. This bill would also allow simply the posting of the law on a bulletin board in the government building.

This legislation also fails the other best practices of public notice. It is not independent, or verifiable, as websites can be hacked and inaccessible, and there is no provision for an affidavit.

We urge an unfavorable report.



**We believe a strong news media is
central to a strong and open society.**

Read local news from around the region at www.mddcnews.com