



**Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association**

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To: Senate EEE Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 20, 2024

Re: **SB978 – FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of news media organizations, from large metro dailies like the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as The Annapolis Capital and the Frederick News Post to publications such as The Daily Record, the AFRO, and online-only publications such as MoCo 360 and Baltimore Banner.

The Press Association applauds efforts to keep communications about candidates and by extension elections transparent and accurate, something that the news media itself strives to achieve. Further, it is appropriate to exempt news media in its newsgathering role as it reports on synthetic media.

As drafted, however, the bill does raise various issues of concern, which we will be happy to work through with the sponsor, including, for example:

- To the extent the proposed legislation would impose on the news media an affirmative legal duty to determine whether an image or recording is “synthetic media,” including because news organizations typically attempt to do so as a matter of editorial policy (SB 978 – Section 13-401.2(B)(1)(II)(2))
- To the extent that the proposed legislation would impose on the news media an affirmative legal duty compelling news organizations to label synthetic media in a particular way (including that “CLEARLY STATES, IN A MANNER REASONABLY CALCULATED TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE AVERAGE READER”) or compelling the news media to report such synthetic media to the State (SB 978 – Section 13-401.2(B)(II)(2)), (C)(I)(2), and (F)(1)(I))
- To the extent that the proposed legislation would allow a subject or the Board to seek, or a court to grant, injunctive relief against the news media (SB 978 – Section 13-401.2(E) and (F)(2))

We look forward to working with the sponsor to resolve these issues.



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

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