

HB0051_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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TESTIMONY ON HB#0051 – FAVORABLE
Business Regulation - Sale of Local News Organizations - Required Notice

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and members of the Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0051, Business Regulation - Sale of Local News Organizations - Required Notice

This bill is an attempt to reign in the disappearance of local news sources from our communities. This is a critical problem in America now, as noted in a study from the [UNC Center for Media Law and Policy](https://citap.unc.edu/news/local-news-platforms-mis-disinformation/#executive-summary), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They have produced *A Summary of current research and policy proposals*.¹ The Executive Summary of the report states:

“Social scientists who study the impact of the Internet, social media, and other forms of digital information sharing paint an alarming picture of the health of American democracy. Our current media ecosystem produces too little high-quality information; we have a tendency to be attracted to information that confirms our existing biases about the world and to share this information with little regard for its veracity; and there are an increasing number of actors who seek to leverage these observations to distort public discourse and to undermine democratic decision-making.”

The report frames the problem and goes on to suggest Regulatory and Policy Solutions. This bill should inspire solutions to many of these problems seen in Maryland. The bill will require a local news organization, at least 120 days before the organization is sold, to provide written notice to certain employees affected by the sale, the Maryland Department of Labor, the governing body of the county where the local news organization is located, and certain nonprofit entities in the business of buying local news organizations. This permits local control and interests to keep the coverage of a community done by, for, and with that community. It places guardrails that prohibit the sale of a local news organization unless the written notice is provided. The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation mandates actions that this bill begins to address.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0051.

¹ <https://citap.unc.edu/news/local-news-platforms-mis-disinformation/#executive-summary>