



THE NEWSGUILD

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January 20, 2025

Chair Delegate C. T. Wilson
Vice Chair Delegate Brian M. Crosby
Economic Matters Committee
231 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair Delegate Wilson and Vice Chair Delegate Crosby,

I'm Jon Schleuss, president of The NewsGuild-CWA. We represent thousands of journalists throughout the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. I write in support of HB 51, which would require a 120 day notice before the sale of a local news organization.

In early 2021 a group of *Baltimore Sun* journalists, other leaders in our union and myself launched the "Save Our Sun" campaign to extract the Baltimore Sun from the clutches of vulture fund Alden Global Capital and return it to local ownership. Alden has a history as a hedge fund that's actively destroyed newspapers across the U.S. It acquires newspapers then extracts the real estate and dramatically cuts staff and costs, while increasing subscription prices.

The "Save Our Sun" campaign garnered thousands of supporters and local businessman Stewart W. Bainum Jr. launched an effort to purchase the Sun and turn it into a nonprofit.

Yet Alden ultimately thwarted our effort. Alden took over the parent company Tribune Publishing in May 202 and fully acquired the Sun and other newsrooms. Bainum started the *Baltimore Banner* as a nonprofit newsroom in response.

Last January the Sun was sold again, this time to David Smith, the executive chairman of local TV company Sinclair.

The paper has been on a steep downward trajectory, losing readers and journalists. The remaining journalists continue to do exceptional work under ownership that interferes and denigrates their stories.

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The constantly changing ownership has been a major distraction for longtime journalists at the paper, who simply want to do their jobs of seeking truth and reporting it.

HB 51 is a step in the right direction to slow the financialization of the news industry. By providing a 120 day notice to workers, the government and nonprofits that buy news organizations, this legislation would provide more time for locals to save their news organizations.

Illinois passed similar legislation last year. With SB 3592, the state now requires companies to provide 120 days of notice if they intend to sell a news organization.

HB 51 comes at a critical moment.

Since 2005, the U.S. has lost more than a third of its newspapers, according to a 2023 study by Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. We lost 130 newspapers in 2023 alone.

And we've lost 43,000 newspaper journalists—almost two thirds—since 2005.

Consolidation and financialization of the news industry is harming our democracy, which depends on journalists to hold institutions to account and report the news.

It's now critical that we stand to support local journalists and local newsrooms by slowing down the consolidation of the news industry.

I urge the committee to support HB 51.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Schleuss', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jon Schleuss
President
The NewsGuild-CWA