



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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To: Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

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Re: HB73 - 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 the Baltimore Banner, Maryland Matters and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association urges the Committee to reject HB 73. This bill would allow a notice of lease transactions up to 5,000 sf to be posted on the Department's website and eMaryland Marketplace INSTEAD of posting in a newspaper of general circulation. This bill raises concerns on a number of levels, including the shortened timeline for notice (from 30 to 20 days), the raised floor that would require posting (2,500 to now 5,000) and the circumvention of newspapers of general circulation to the department website and eMaryland Marketplace. This bill requests LESS transparency in state leases.

We ask that the Committee reject the increase in square footage as a floor for lease transactions and the diminution of length of notice, and further ask that the Page 2, lines 8-11 be restored. We believe more notice is better and support adding to the notice requirement by posting to a newspaper of general circulation AND the Department's website and eMaryland Marketplace.

More notice is better notice, and news publications have a far wider audience reach than government websites. Moreover, in a recent regional readership survey, respondents overwhelmingly (67% of respondents) wanted notices to be in local newspapers and their websites.

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 allows the fracturing of notice location and potentially takes those notices 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. Without those requested changes, the Press Association cannot support this bill, and asks the Committee for an unfavorable report.



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