



## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony:** House Bill 1119, Procurement - Advertising - Local News Organizations

**Committee:** Health and Government Operations

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2025

**Position:** Favorable

Good afternoon Chair Pena-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullinson. For the record, I'm Delegate Linda Foley, and I am presenting HB1119: Procurement - Advertising - Local News Organizations.

This bill requires that at least 50% of the value of state government advertising in digital or print publications, with some exceptions, go directly to qualified "local news organizations" as defined in the legislation. These are entities that have a physical presence in Maryland, employ full-time journalists dedicated to covering the state, and meet other criteria to demonstrate their commitment to local news coverage.

This legislation is critical to supporting local journalism and ensuring that state government advertising dollars are invested back into the communities they serve. At a time when local news organizations are struggling to maintain operations and keep reporters on the ground covering important issues, this bill would provide a much-needed boost.

According to a 2023 Maryland Local News Ecosystem study by the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism, 39% of state news organizations say they are skeptical they could survive in two years without revenue growth. It is important to note that most news outlets in Maryland are small, with the majority having budgets of less than \$250,000 a year, and more than a third having budgets \$100,000 or less.

This targeted procurement policy will help channel state advertising resources to the news outlets that are truly embedded in and serving Maryland communities. It will provide a reliable revenue stream to support local journalism and ensure citizens have access to high-quality reporting on the issues that matter most to them.

I want to acknowledge exemptions from this policy for advertising related to tourism promotion and employee recruitment. This bill does not affect those types of ads, which usually must appear in out-of-state media.

Overall, this bill represents a strategic investment in the future of local news in Maryland. By directing state digital and print advertising dollars to qualifying local news organizations, we can help sustain this critical civic infrastructure and ensure all Marylanders have access to the information they need to be engaged and informed citizens.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 1119. Thank you.