



Bill: HB 74- Legal Advertisement or Legal Notice - Publication in Newspaper or Newspaper in General Circulation - Digital Newspapers

Position: Support w/ Amendments

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the City of Gaithersburg, I write to support with amendments **HB 74, Legal Advertisement or Legal Notice - Publication in Newspaper or Newspaper in General Circulation - Digital Newspapers.**

This bill establishes requirements for publishing legal advertisements and notices in counties and municipalities in Maryland. It allows these publications to be in digital format, if the digital publication maintains an archive and employs at least one employee for reporting, writing, or editing local news and information. The City of Gaithersburg has long advocated for changes to the laws mandating print advertising of legal ads and notices in a newspaper of general circulation. These arcane requirements cause Gaithersburg's taxpayers to expend more than \$15,000 annually for costs associated with print advertising of legal and other public notices that largely go unseen by residents.

Public notice requirements should fundamentally consider whether the advertisement reaches its intended audience and should accurately reflect modern-day information-sharing processes. With websites, the proliferation of social media, and other online sources to disseminate information, local governments should not have to continue to follow antiquated advertising requirements to pay print newspapers of varied circulation and accountability to distribute notices which can be shared electronically, often at a lower cost and reaching targeted communities more effectively.

While we generally support the direction and intent of HB 74, we respectfully request an amendment under Article – General Provisions, that would expand and further clarify the definition of a “newspaper” or “newspaper in general circulation” to mean a publication that:

- Engages professionals to create, edit, produce, and distribute original content concerning matters of public interest, through reporting activities, including conducting interviews, observing current events, or analyzing documents or other information;

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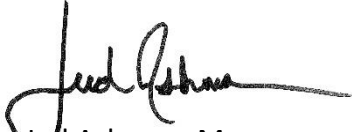
CITY MANAGER
Tanisha R. Briley

- Has at least one employee employed full-time for 30 hours a week or more dedicated to providing coverage of the community and living within 50 miles of the coverage area, who gathers, prepares, collects, photographs, writes, edits, reports, or publishes original local or state community news for dissemination to the local or state community;

The City of Gaithersburg believes that HB 74, with these amendments, offers a meaningful and practical step forward for communities seeking to reach their communities more efficiently and affordably.

Should you have any questions, please contact me on my cell at 301-466-5350 or our government relations consultant, Sarah Peters, at speters@hbstrategies.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jud Ashman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jud Ashman, Mayor
City of Gaithersburg