



House Bill 74

*Legal Advertisement or Legal Notice - Publication in Newspaper or Newspaper in
General Circulation - Digital Newspapers*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: January 22, 2025

From: Sarah Sample and Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 74**. This bill authorizes a county that does not have a qualifying newspaper for certain legal advertisements or notices, to publish the required information in a comparable digital format to maintain compliance with state law. The bill expands a local provision, successfully sought by one jurisdiction, to apply to any county facing a lack of broad print media offerings.

Currently, certain legal notices and advertisements often required of local governments, must be published in a "newspaper of general circulation." With fewer print outlets, local governments face significant challenges in publishing required notices. This bill provides counties with a practical and necessary solution to meet legal notice requirements as traditional newspapers transition to digital formats or cease operations altogether. HB 74 offers an additional option for local jurisdictions to maintain compliance when this state requirement is necessary if a local jurisdiction lacks an eligible print news outlet.

Additionally, MACo supports the reasonable and clear eligibility criteria to ensure these platforms are reliable and serve the public interest. Platforms used for public notices should demonstrate a commitment to professional standards, such as producing original content and maintaining a tangible connection to the communities they serve. These safeguards ensure residents can access timely, accurate, and meaningful information while properly allowing counties to satisfy public notice provisions in a changing media landscape.

HB 74 modernizes how county governments are required to do business and ensures local operations can continue without interruption regardless of the market shifts in news and information distribution. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 74.