



To: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

From: Tim Nelson, Counsel to the Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association

Date: Submitted - February 16, 2026; Hearing - February 18, 2026

Re: Senate Bill 459

The Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association (“MDCD” or the “Association”)¹ appreciates the opportunity to submit this written testimony regarding Senate Bill 459, “Procurement - Advertising - Local News Organizations (Local Newspapers for Maryland Communities Act of 2026),” which legislation would require that units of State government spend 50% of their digital and print advertising expenditures with local news organizations. On behalf of the Association and its Members, which include approximately 20 television stations and 110 radio stations, MDCD urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 459.

As you may know, each MDCD Member broadcast station is licensed by the Federal Communications Commission and is required, pursuant to that license, to operate in and serve the public interest. MDCD’s Member stations embrace that mandate with passion and enthusiasm. Not only do MDCD’s Member stations provide critical news, weather, emergency, sports, traffic, health, and other information both on-air and online, they also participate in and sponsor events in the very communities in which their employees live and work. Yet local broadcasters face significant challenges as they aim to fulfill their unique role in the rapidly changing media ecosystem—many of them financial.

Producing high-quality, local broadcast news is an exceedingly costly endeavor. Broadcasters fund their on-air and digital operations through advertising dollars; advertising accounts for virtually all of the revenues for Maryland’s radio stations and roughly half of the revenues for the State’s television stations. Advertising revenues, however, have been declining sharply for years. The revolution in digital technology and the explosive growth of the Internet have led to a handful of giant, unregulated digital platforms dominating the advertising marketplace, including at the local level. This, in turn, has negatively impacted local broadcasters from a competitive standpoint. Advertisers and the critical revenues they provide to local stations have been diverted away from the broadcasters and local news organizations that produce accurate, trusted, objective, local journalism in communities across Maryland.

Senate Bill 459, by requiring units of State government to spend 50% of their print and digital advertising budget with local news organizations, appears designed to direct certain revenues into local newsrooms. That investment, in turn, will aid local journalism across

¹ The Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association is a voluntary, non-profit trade association that advocates for the interests of its member radio and television stations and, more generally, the interests of broadcasting in Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C.

Maryland, to the benefit of the State's citizens. Indeed, Senate Bill 459 is an investment in local news and communities across Maryland.

The Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association appreciates Senator Rosapepe's leadership on this issue, and for the reasons set forth above, MDCD urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 459.

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