



FAV: Senate Bill 459

02/16/2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget & Taxation
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone,

On behalf of Baltimore Public Media, the proud producer of Maryland's NPR member station WYPR, I write in support of Senate Bill 459 and to express our sincere appreciation for the proposed amendments that broaden the definition of "local news organizations" to include public media during this critical time for our sector.

We are grateful to Vice Chair Rosapepe and the Committee for recognizing that Maryland's local journalism ecosystem includes newspapers, digital outlets, and locally operated public radio and public television stations that together inform communities across the state. The proposed amendments reflect the way Marylanders access trusted news and ensure that public policy strengthens the full spectrum of local journalism.

At a time when newsrooms across the country are shrinking and communities are experiencing the effects of news deserts, this legislation represents an important commitment to sustaining independent, community-based reporting. Public media plays a unique role within that ecosystem. We provide free, universally accessible journalism—on air and online—reaching urban, suburban, and rural residents alike. Importantly, public media operates under a nonprofit model that reinvests resources directly into journalism and public service. State advertising support does not simply purchase audience impressions; it helps sustain reporters, editors, producers, and technical staff who are dedicated to serving the public interest.

This inclusion is especially important in light of the recent rescission of federal funding for public broadcasting, which has placed significant strain on stations nationwide, including here in Maryland. At the same time, journalists across the country are operating in an environment of heightened polarization and increasing pressure on the freedom and independence of the press. In such moments, strong local institutions rooted in community trust are essential. Supporting public media as part of our diverse news ecosystem helps ensure that Maryland residents continue to have access to independent, fact-based reporting that serves the public—not partisan or commercial interests.



We appreciate the Vice Chair Rosapepe's leadership and the Committee's thoughtful consideration of the proposed amendments that make this bill more inclusive and more effective. If passed into law, Senate Bill 459 will help ensure that Maryland residents have access to strong, independent local journalism for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'David Belew' with a long, sweeping underline.

David Belew
Director of Development
Baltimore Public Media