

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

I testify in strong support of HB0043 on behalf of The Baltimore Banner, an award-winning independent digital news organization, and other local Maryland publishers. This budget-neutral bill requires state agencies to direct at least 50% of their print and digital advertising procurement contracts directly to **local news organizations**.

Local publishers like the Banner are uniquely positioned to serve state agencies effectively. We operate full-service media capabilities, including the ability to purchase and manage advertising on major platforms such as Meta, Google Ads, LinkedIn, and programmatic networks. Unlike self-service big-tech platforms—where advertisers often rely on automated systems with minimal support—our clients work directly with dedicated human account managers and media experts. This personalized service delivers better strategy, optimization, local market insights, and campaign performance.

Critically, every dollar spent through local media stays in Maryland. These funds support newsrooms, journalists, editors, sales teams, and local jobs rather than flowing to out-of-state corporations like Google or Meta. Local organizations understand Maryland audiences, communities, and issues, enabling more targeted and effective outreach—especially to hard-to-reach populations.

Maryland has lost significant journalism capacity in recent years, including multiple newspapers and a sharp decline in journalists. HB0043 helps reverse this crisis without increasing overall ad spending or dictating ad content. It mirrors successful models in New York City, where community outlets saw ad revenue rise dramatically (from \$1M to nearly \$17M), enabling hiring and better coverage, with no harm to message delivery.

We urge a favorable report on HB0043 to keep taxpayer dollars local, strengthen journalism, and improve advertising results for the state.

Respectfully,

Sharon Nevins
Chief Revenue Officer
The Baltimore Banner