



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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To: House Government, Labor & Operations Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

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Re: **MDDC FAVORABLE SB 459**

The Maryland-Delaware-DC Press Association (MDDC) represents a diverse membership of news media organizations. Our membership includes large metro dailies such as *The Washington Post* and *The Baltimore Sun*, hometown newspapers such as *The Star Democrat* and *Dorchester Star*, specialty publications such as *The Daily Record* and *Baltimore Jewish Times*, and leading online news organizations such as *Baltimore Banner*, *Maryland Matters*, and *Baltimore Brew*. Our membership spans both for-profit and nonprofit models and reflects the full ecosystem of local journalism that Marylanders depend on every day.

We **strongly support SB 459 and its amendments**, which would prioritize local Maryland news organizations for advertising from Maryland state agencies. This bill is a **revenue-neutral approach** that keeps Maryland's advertising dollars in the state and strategically invests those funds in the **local information infrastructure** that serves every community across Maryland.

Why SB 459 Matters

Local news organizations deliver trusted information that drives civic engagement, supports small businesses, and connects Maryland communities. However, the business model that once sustained local news — especially advertising revenue — has been profoundly disrupted in recent decades, contributing to closures and reduced coverage across the country. According to a comprehensive U.S. Government Accountability Office report, local newspapers have faced years of declining advertising and circulation revenues and significant newsroom layoffs. As a result, many communities lack robust journalism that supports accountability and civic participation. Maryland is lucky that every jurisdiction in the state has a local news outlet but this is not a guarantee.

SB 459 would help address these economic pressures by ensuring that **state advertising expenditures prioritize Maryland-based media**, helping to sustain jobs, journalism, and the local economies tied to the news ecosystem.

Maryland's local news organizations reach broad audiences across Maryland, the region and the country. Our members regularly place advertising that focuses on the needs of the client in print, insert, digital, programmatic, email, billboard, tv, radio, and direct mail marketing as well as events and sponsorships and other channels. Any product or service that Maryland's agencies are



We believe a strong news media is central to a strong and open society.

able to procure from out of state agencies and advertisers can be replicated by local news organizations.

Modeled on Proven Practices in Other Jurisdictions

SB 459 draws on models from other cities and states that have successfully experimented with directing government advertising dollars toward community media. Cities like **New York City, Chicago, San Francisco**, and jurisdictions across the country have implemented targeted ad spending policies that allocate a portion of government advertising budgets to smaller local and community media outlets.

For example, a **2022 study of New York City's program** found that a total of **282 print and digital local outlets** were approved to receive city government advertising, with amounts ranging from a few hundred dollars to over \$1 million. This data shows that community media outlets are receiving ad revenue they otherwise would not have obtained, expanding their financial capacity and community reach. (CUNY study excerpt, FY2021 results)

Benefits of Targeted Government Advertising

- 1. Strengthens Local Media Financial Health without New Taxes**

Ad set-aside programs leverage funds already allocated for government advertising and redirect them to **community media that serve Maryland residents**. Redirecting existing ad spending helps sustain newsroom jobs and local operations without increasing the state budget.

- 2. Expands Reach into Underserved Communities**

Local and community media often have deeper trust and engagement with diverse audiences, including rural, low-income, and minority populations. Targeted government advertising ensures that government communications **reach all residents effectively** while strengthening outlets that provide culturally relevant reporting.

- 3. Promotes Civic Engagement and Information Access**

Research shows that local news supports civic awareness, voter participation, and government accountability. Policies that support newsrooms help counteract the decline in local reporting caused by digital ad displacement and market consolidation. Public policy approaches — including advertising support — are widely seen as an important tool for bolstering local journalism ecosystems.

- 4. Encourages Better Targeted Advertising Spend**

By prioritizing local media, state agencies are likely to receive **more effective and locally targeted advertising placements**. Local outlets understand regional markets and audience behavior better than national platforms, potentially improving the return on advertising investments.

SB 459 creates a **clear, straightforward mechanism** for local media to become state advertising vendors. Requiring that a **minimum of 50% of state advertising budgets prioritize Maryland-based media outlets** will help stabilize local news organizations while improving the reach and relevance of public information campaigns. Several local news organizations — including MDDC and its members — offer **full-service advertising capabilities** across print, digital, broadcast, email, programmatic, and sponsorship channels, and routinely partner with clients of all sizes to execute effective marketing strategies.

SB 459 represents a **practical, revenue-neutral policy** that strengthens Maryland's news ecosystem, supports economic activity tied to local journalism jobs, and ensures that state advertising investments benefit Maryland audiences and communities. The experience of other jurisdictions indicates that targeted government advertising is a viable strategy for sustaining and diversifying local media revenue.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 459.