



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

P.O. Box 26214 | Baltimore, MD 21210

443-768-3281 | rsnyder@mddcpres.com

www.mddcpres.com

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: January 20, 2026

Re: **SB 64 – UNFAVORABLE**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of news media organizations. Our membership ranges from large metro dailies such as the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as the Star Democrat and Dorchester Banner, to publications such as The Daily Record, Baltimore Jewish Times, and online-only publications such as the Baltimore Banner, Maryland Matters and Baltimore Brew. Our membership spans both for-profit and nonprofit organizations and reflects the full ecosystem of local journalism relied upon by Marylanders every day.

The Press Association opposes SB 64.

SB 64 represents a radical and unnecessary departure from long-standing public notice policy in Maryland. As written, the bill would permit all categories of public notices—governmental, judicial, and private—to be placed in either print publications or digital-only outlets. While the bill is presented as a continuation of HB 74, which was heard in this chamber last session and supported by MDDC, it is in fact a fundamentally different proposal with far broader and concerning implications.

There are well-established best practices governing public notices. To serve the public interest, notices must be **independent, accessible, verifiable, and broadly distributed** so that the greatest number of people can reasonably be informed of actions affecting their rights, property, and communities. These principles—recognized nationally and articulated by organizations such as the Public Notice Resource Center—exist to ensure transparency, accountability, and public trust. For decades, the Press Association has advocated for these standards because they reflect sound public policy and center the public’s right to know. Read more from the Public Notice Resource Center’s Policy Briefing Booklet [here](#).

SB 64 would upend these principles by fundamentally altering the definition of a “newspaper of general circulation.” The bill considered last year took a far more measured and responsible approach. HB 74 created a narrow pathway for **government notices only** to be published digitally *when no qualifying print publication exists within a jurisdiction*. That framework preserved the key virtues of printed notice—archivability, permanence, and immunity from alteration—while thoughtfully acknowledging the evolving media landscape. Importantly, it anticipated a future need without prematurely dismantling a system that continues to function effectively today. At present, **there is**



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

no jurisdiction in Maryland that lacks a printed publication serving its community. Our members remain deeply committed to print journalism. The large majority of journalists and media professionals in Maryland work for organizations with a print component, and many publishers continue to invest significantly in printed products and printing infrastructure. Print is not disappearing from Maryland’s media ecosystem, nor should public policy assume otherwise.

The Press Association also recognizes that print deadlines and limited print schedules can create logistical challenges for time-sensitive government notices. That is precisely why last year’s bill struck an appropriate balance. It acknowledged that notices are typically published both in print and online and sensibly “started the clock” when the notice first appeared—whether digitally or in print. This approach combined the immediacy of digital publication with the reliability and permanence of print. SB 64 abandons this balanced solution.

Public notice publication requires infrastructure, institutional capacity, and long-term stability. Many digital-only outlets operate with very small staffs, limited administrative systems, and in some cases, do not accept advertising at all. While *The Baltimore Banner*—a valued and respected member of our Association—is a notable exception, it is unique. Public policy should not be reshaped to accommodate the business model of a single organization, particularly at the expense of a system that has served Maryland residents for generations.

Public notices play a critical role in the orderly operation of government, courts, real estate transactions, procurement, and development projects. Reliance on internet-only publication introduces unnecessary risk and confusion. Websites can experience outages, be hacked, or be altered without clear detection. Digital content can be modified or removed, intentionally or unintentionally. Printed notices provide a stable, immutable record that can be independently verified over time—an essential safeguard for legal and civic processes.

Print and digital publications must be held to similar standards to verify audience and circulation. Print circulation audits are mandatory, standardized, and public and include Statements of Ownership required by the USPS. Digital “circulation” measures are optional, variable, and often private. Digital-only publications **can demonstrate audience reach**, but they **do not undergo circulation audits comparable to print publications unless they voluntarily and consistently subject themselves to third-party review—and even then, the standards are not equivalent.** When notices require specific geographic distribution, for instance at the county level, digital measurement becomes even less objective and clear driven largely by the predominance of consumption on mobile devices. Digital-only publications cannot fulfill the same public notice role without weakening transparency and public confidence.

Clarity and neutrality in determining who may carry public notices is essential. The existing definition of a “newspaper of general circulation” provides an objective and time-tested standard. It establishes a neutral framework rather than allowing disputes to be resolved ad hoc or without clear authority. Under SB 64, if a disagreement arises over whether a digital-only publication qualifies to publish notices, there is no clear decision-maker or enforcement mechanism. This uncertainty invites litigation, inconsistency, and erosion of public trust.

For these reasons, the Maryland–Delaware–District of Columbia Press Association respectfully urges the committee to reject SB 64. We stand ready to work with legislators on thoughtful, balanced solutions—like last year’s HB 74—that modernize public notice practices without sacrificing transparency, accountability, or the public’s right to know.