



## TESTIMONY

**COMMITTEE:** House Judiciary

**DATE:** January 28, 2026

**POSITION:** Favorable with Amendments

**BILL:** HB 10

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) supports House Bill 10, with amendment.

MML supports the goal of modernizing public notice requirements. For decades, our member municipalities have been tethered to increasingly expensive public notice requirements, often posted in newspapers that do not report on the area's local politics or events. SB 64 represents an overdue step toward modernization.

However, we do not believe this legislation sufficiently remedies the challenge at hand. Based on the criteria outlined for digital placement, such coverage will likely remain unavailable to many jurisdictions in the state. There are also no provisions of the bill that clearly cut costs for taxpayers.

As an example of the costs – whenever a local jurisdiction is changing its charter, four separate public notice posts are required (Md. Code, Local Govt. § 4-304). If that municipality is in Montgomery or Prince George's, the Washington Post is likely their only “newspaper of general circulation.” The Washington Post charges \$500 per public notice. So, in those areas, **merely publicizing charter amendments can cost municipal taxpayers \$2000**.

One member reports spending \$15,000 annually on public notices. Combining all municipal, county, and state required public notices, taxpayers are likely paying hundreds of thousands of dollars – if not millions – each year to place public notices in the back of newspapers that are experiencing a decline in readership.

Local governments in several states are starting to see relief. Effective March 1, 2026, government entities in New Jersey can move most legal notices to their official websites. Utah has a robust "Public Notice Website" ([Utah.gov/pmn/](http://Utah.gov/pmn/)) which serves as the primary repository for notices. Florida allows local governments to post election and some legal notices on county websites instead of newspapers.

MML is advocating for a state-wide, free-to-access public notice portal housed in the State Archives. It should be searchable and allow for notifications on topics of interest or jurisdictions of interest. We believe this modernization approach would save taxpayer dollars while preserving independent oversight and guaranteeing that these notices remain a permanent, unalterable part of Maryland's historical record.

For these reasons, the Maryland Municipal League requests a favorable report on HB 10 with amendment.

Amendment on following pages.

### Modernizing Public Notices: The Universal Access Amendment (MML)

The following proposed amendment is structured to establish a state-wide, free-to-access public notice portal housed in the State Archives. The portal will be searchable, filterable, and allow members of the public to subscribe to notifications. In doing so, it will increase general accessibility for Marylanders, especially for those who face barriers to traditional print media, such as the visually impaired and Maryland's diverse non-English speaking populations. The establishment and operation will be paid for via the collection of reasonable fees from local governments.

To ensure local reach, the amendment also requires local governments to publish notices on their website or use a “newspaper of general circulation” if they don’t maintain one.

Finally, to inform the public of the change, the amendment requires local governments to post a transitional notice in their newspaper of general circulation quarterly for 1 year.

In short, the amendment contains 4 components:

1. Creates the centralized Digital Public Notice Portal in the State Archives.
2. Establishes the broad authority for public notice requirement to be satisfied by posting to a jurisdiction’s website and the Digital Public Notice Portal.
3. Provides template language to address each unique section of code that requires public notice.
4. Requires jurisdictions, through uncodified language, to post a transitional notice in the local newspaper quarterly for 1 year.

#### Component 1: creating the centralized Digital Public Notice Portal in the State Archives.

Adding State Government Article § 9-1028

- (A) THE STATE ARCHIVIST SHALL ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN, AND UPDATE A DIGITAL PUBLIC NOTICE PORTAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING AND PUBLISHING LEGAL NOTICES FROM STATE AGENCIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.**
- (B) THE PORTAL ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL, AT A MINIMUM, PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONALITY:**
- 1. A KEYWORD-SEARCHABLE DATABASE OF ALL ACTIVE AND ARCHIVED NOTICES;**
  - 2. THE ABILITY FOR USERS TO FILTER NOTICES BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY; AND**
  - 3. AN AUTOMATED NOTIFICATION SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO SUBSCRIBE TO ALERTS BASED ON SPECIFIC TOPICS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OR AGENCIES.**
- (C) THE STATE ARCHIVIST SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION, INCLUDING STANDARDS FOR:**
- 1. THE FORMAT AND SUBMISSION DEADLINES FOR LEGAL NOTICES;**

**2. THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE PORTAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MARYLAND DIGITAL PLAYBOOK AND THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT.**

- (D) THE STATE ARCHIVIST MAY ESTABLISH AND COLLECT REASONABLE FEES FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR THE PUBLICATION OF LEGAL NOTICES ON THE PORTAL TO RECOVER THE ACTUAL COSTS OF ESTABLISHING, OPERATING, AND MAINTAINING THE PORTAL.**

Component 2: Establishing the broad authority for public notice requirement to be satisfied by posting to a jurisdiction's website and the Digital Public Notice Portal.

Adding General Provisions §1-113.1

- (A) NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF LAW, IN A LAW, RESOLUTION, OR COURT ORDER, JUDGMENT, OR DECREE THAT REFERS TO PUBLISHING A LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE, THE REQUIREMENT TO PUBLISH IS SATISFIED BY POSTING THE ADVERTISEMENT OR NOTICE ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S WEBSITE AND THE DIGITAL PUBLIC NOTICE PORTAL ESTABLISHED UNDER § 9-1028 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE.**
- (B) IF A LAW REQUIRES MULTIPLE PUBLICATIONS OVER A PERIOD OF WEEKS, THE REQUIREMENT IS SATISFIED IF THE NOTICE REMAINS CONTINUOUSLY ACCESSIBLE ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S WEBSITE AND THE DIGITAL PUBLIC NOTICE PORTAL FOR THE DURATION OF THAT PERIOD.**

Component 3: Amending various state and local government public notice requirements as necessary with some version of:

- A. Publishing a fair summary of the proposed amendment on:**
- 1. the jurisdiction's website; and,**
  - 2. the digital public notice portal defined in State Government Article § 9-1028**
- B. If a municipality does not maintain a website, then it must publish a fair summary of the proposed amendment in a newspaper of general circulation in the municipality.**

Component 4: requiring jurisdictions to post a transitional notice (from the paper to website/portal) quarterly for 1 year.

**SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:**

**(A) FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2026, EACH COUNTY AND MUNICIPALITY SHALL PUBLISH A NOTICE AT LEAST ONCE PER QUARTER IN A NEWSPAPER OF GENERAL CIRCULATION SERVING THE JURISDICTION.**

**(B) THE NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION SHALL INFORM THE PUBLIC THAT LEGAL NOTICES PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN**

**THE NEWSPAPER MAY NOW BE FOUND ON: (1) THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY; AND (2) THE PUBLIC NOTICE PORTAL MAINTAINED BY THE STATE ARCHIVES.**

**(C) THIS SECTION SHALL REMAIN EFFECTIVE FOR A PERIOD OF 1 YEAR AND, AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2027, THIS SECTION, WITH NO FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SHALL BE ABROGATED AND OF NO FURTHER FORCE AND EFFECT.**

---

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

Justin Fiore: Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, [justinf@mdmunicipal.org](mailto:justinf@mdmunicipal.org)