

Submitter: Jonathan Maus
On Behalf Of: BikePortland
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2605

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for taking time to consider the Protect Journalism Act (HB 2605). I strongly support this bill for two main reasons: I'm an Oregonian who believes that a well-informed public is essential to a strong democracy, and because I'm the owner of a small news business who knows all too well how hard it is to survive in today's media business.

I launched BikePortland in 2005 — 18 years ago — because I saw a gap in our community that needed to be filled. There was no central, trusted source of information where all the different groups, people, policymakers and organizations could come together, learn from one another, build a stronger community, and learn about important news that could impact their lives.

Nearly 20 years in, I've won journalism awards, awards from advocacy groups, a special commendation from a member of the United State Congress, and have been the subject of numerous magazine and newspaper stories. I've built a platform that reaches hundreds of thousands of people every month. Our work has influenced countless policies, projects, and people.

But I don't consider BikePortland a success. Why? Because, despite broad support from our community, and many years of hard work, we are still on the verge of running out of money.

The news business is unforgiving, and it's not a meritocracy. It doesn't care about the quality of your work or the impact it has on the community. It only cares about clicks. I believe in focusing on what's vital, not viral. I have felt the urge to favor clicks over quality — to give people a piece of candy instead of a well-rounded meal — because that's often where the money is. But doing that leads to a race to the bottom and it's not what is best for our community or for Oregon.

As a for-profit corporation, we don't pursue grant funding and we can't offer tax deductions for donations. That makes our funding challenge even more difficult, and it makes us even more reliant on the financial support of individual Oregonians.

The legislature has already created the political tax credit to encourage more people to support and get engaged in electoral politics. We should have protected journalism first. After all, more funding for political parties without the news outlets and

journalists to hold them accountable in this age of divisive, win-at-all-costs, misinformation campaigns — puts Oregon's democracy in peril.

The local news business has never been a downhill ride in the park. But these days it's like trying to pedal a bicycle through a sandy desert without water. HB 2605 would be an oasis for a business like mine.

Please support this bill. Let's rebuild the foundation of local news.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

- Jonathan Maus, founder, editor and publisher of BikePortland -
maus.jonathan@gmail.com