

Submitter: Kaylee Domzalski
On Behalf Of: HB2605
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2605

As a chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association, AAJA Portland supports a national mission of bringing together journalists and media professionals to advance diversity in newsrooms and ensure fair and accurate coverage of communities of color. Of the major national groups representing journalists of color, only AAJA has a professional chapter in Oregon.

The Portland chapter's board of directors is not taking a position on House Bill 2605 at this time, but we are deeply concerned about the the state's underresourced journalism institutions.

With the journalism industry's funding models in crisis, representation in newsrooms suffers. Young scholars who are considering a career in journalism but lack generational resources will opt for a more stable field. When newsroom budgets and staff are cut, journalists of color are often disproportionately affected. Those losses are compounded by attrition when mid-career journalists choose to leave in search of greater financial stability. Representation in coverage suffers, too, as newsrooms lose connections to diverse communities and focus their depleted resources on institutions of power and influence.

The same headwinds affect ethnic media, which serve specific audiences to fill the gaps unaddressed by general-audience news sources, and small, frequently rural publications that serve diverse audiences by virtue of their coverage areas.

When Oregonians see themselves, their communities and their concerns underrepresented or not represented in news coverage, that can lead to distrust in and disengagement from the news media and other democratic institutions. The absence of certain voices can then lead news organizations to overlook or deprioritize them when allocating resources for coverage, setting up a vicious cycle.

We believe that a vibrant press empowers Oregon's communities. AAJA Portland supports a discussion of the needs of local journalism and appreciates that the Legislature is looking at this issue.