

Submitter: David Sommers  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3431

Chair Sosa, Vice Chairs Chaichi and Osborne, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3431 and thank you Representative Gomberg for introducing this important legislation.

This bill smartly modernizes Oregon's public notice requirements by allowing a broader range of established news organizations to publish legally required notices. HB 3431 strengthens transparency, expands public access, and provides local governments with a more cost-effective way to communicate with residents—all while preserving the fundamental purpose of public notice laws: ensuring Oregonians are informed about government actions that affect them.

Historically, Oregon law has required public notices to be published in print newspapers—a practice that made sense when newspapers were the dominant source of community news. However, today's media landscape has changed dramatically, and so have the ways people receive information.

In Oregon, 68% of incorporated cities and three entire counties now lack a local news source. Requiring public notices to appear exclusively in print publications ignores this reality. In many communities, local newspapers either no longer exist or have drastically reduced their reach. The goal of public notice laws should be to ensure information reaches the widest possible audience—not to preserve an outdated revenue model for legacy media companies.

Advancing this legislation will have a twofold benefit:

- Supporting a broader array of news organizations in more Oregon communities—ensuring public notices appear in outlets that are actively covering local communities and engaging their audiences.
- Reducing costs to local governments and taxpayers—ending the reliance on a print outlet as the only option, fostering competition, and potentially driving down costs for public notice placements. Print publications should not be the only option for public notices; rather, they should be one option among several, allowing local governments to choose the most effective platform to reach their communities.

Local governments need more effective and affordable options for disseminating

public notices, especially in areas underserved by traditional newspapers. Expanding eligibility for public notices ensures that critical information is published by news organizations that are actively engaged in their communities and reaching the widest possible audience.

Opponents of HB 3431 argue that removing the print requirement will harm newspapers financially. However, the purpose of public notices is to inform the public efficiently and effectively—not to subsidize certain types of news organizations.

Furthermore, this opposition is based on the premise that government-mandated revenue streams from public and legal notices should sustain select businesses, even as the news industry itself continues to evolve. Public notices should be placed where they are most accessible to the public—not where they selectively generate revenue for a single sector of the local media.

HB 3431 is a common-sense modernization of Oregon's public notice laws. It gives local governments the flexibility to publish notices in the most effective and cost-efficient way possible while ensuring that public information remains transparent and widely accessible.

This bill does not harm local journalism—it strengthens it. By recognizing a broader array of news organizations in Oregon, HB 3431 levels the playing field and ensures that communities receive timely, well-documented, and widely available public notices.

I urge the committee to support HB 3431 and advance it for further consideration.  
Thank you.