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**State Sen. Jama, and Members**

Oregon State Senate Committee on Rules

Salem, OR

Chair Jama and Members,

Local news is an essential service to our communities. These journalists are often the only people attending city council meetings, following up with our police and fire departments or covering local elections. In times of crisis, local reporters work tirelessly to help disseminate information that keeps people safe.

Despite this crucial role local newsrooms play, they're dying.

I've worked in local news for the last five years, three of which I've spent in Oregon. I currently write for the Columbia County Spotlight, and I love what I do. My work is important, varied and meaningful, and I often feel like I'm the exact right kind of person to do this job. How lucky am I to get to do what it feels like I was meant for?

But I'm also overworked, underpaid and working for a publication that — like many other local newspapers in Oregon — is in very real danger of closing. It would be an extreme blow to a community that has been rocked by scandal to lose its last dedicated newspaper, but we are already down to paying one reporter (myself) less than \$20 an hour to cover an entire county. There is no more wiggle room.

And as much as I love what I do, I worry about what my future in this career looks like. I recently got engaged and hope to start a family sometime in the not-too-distant future. I sacrifice earning a liveable wage because I love my job and I care about doing something that benefits my community, but how will I justify that when I become a mother?

The state of local news today disincentivizes journalists from spending their entire careers in the industry, and every time we lose someone to another field with better hours and higher pay (or have to lay them off), we lose a wealth of experience. In five years, I could be a journalist with a decade of reporting under my belt, or I could be a former journalist doing something that can support my family.

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Meanwhile, I watch as tech companies profit off my work. Journalism attracts people to these platforms and keeps them there while the industry collapses around them. This has been a fact of the digital era that none of us could do anything about — until now.

If we want to continue to have local newsrooms, we have to do something different. We have a chance to help local newsrooms flourish, and when newsrooms thrive, so does our democracy.

We must ask these companies to pay their fair share now, before it's too late.

Sincerely,

*Kaelyn Cassidy*

**Reporter:** *Columbia County Spotlight*

**Assistant Editor:** *Beaverton Valley Times, Columbia County Spotlight, Forest Grove News-Times, Hillsboro News-Times, Newberg Graphic, The (Tigard-Tualatin-Sherwood) Times, Woodburn Independent*