

Submitter: Nathan Wilson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB686
Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nathan Wilson, and I graduated from the University of Oregon with honors in Journalism and Environmental Studies last summer. Through the Charles Snowden Program, which competitively matches top-tier journalism students with newsrooms across the state, I began my internship at Columbia Gorge News, a weekly paper in Hood River and The Dalles, just weeks after throwing my cap in the air.

Fast forward 10 months: I'm now one of three full-time reporters responsible for covering three counties. Based on the phone calls, emails and letters to the editor I receive, I know that my work — whether it's about an unfair utility bill increase or a local zoning dispute — provides a needed service. I'm increasingly uncertain, however, about whether I can continue to provide that service.

Come May, I'll have moved four times in less than one year because I can't afford housing. I depend on food stamps, even with a job and college degree. I know my publisher wants to pay me more but can't because costs are so tight — nobody received their typical annual bonus last year for that reason.

If Oregon wants to attract and retain young, upcoming journalists — who will be critical in navigating the transition from print to online — small, rural newsrooms in particular need more help. I love my job and I want to keep doing it, but I also need to make my personal ends meet. For those reasons, I support SB 686.