



Oregon Public Broadcasting

7140 S Macadam Avenue Portland, OR 97219

503.977.7799 opb.org

April 23, 2025

Testimony to and in reference to:

Senate Committee on Rules

RE: SB 686 (*Requires online platforms to pay digital journalism providers or donate to the Oregon Civic Information Consortium*)

Dear Chair Jama, Vice Chair Bonham, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Oregon Public Broadcasting, I strongly endorse the passage of SB 686.

This bill comes at a critical time for the journalism ecosystem in Oregon. In recent years, we've been distressed to see huge contractions in the journalism sector through cutbacks, closures, and consolidation by out-of-state owners. In [an OPB story published in December](#), our analysis found that in Oregon, newspaper employment had dwindled to 1,586 people in 2022, from a high of over 10,000 in 2006.

We see an opportunity for this bill to reverse some of these troubling trends, by ensuring that local news organizations in Oregon are fairly compensated by the Big Tech platforms.

Our position on this bill arises from our history serving communities all across the state of Oregon, and our core organizational values. OPB is an independent, nonprofit organization driven by our mission: **Connecting people across Oregon and the Pacific Northwest through the power of a shared story.**

We have deep roots here, starting in 1922 as a physics experiment in AM radio on the campus of what was then Oregon Agricultural College.

We serve as the state's most accessible source of trusted, carefully vetted news and information, with news bureaus based in Bend and Pendleton, and in-depth reporting across a wide range of topics such as education, business, and health care. Our teams from programs such as Oregon Field Guide, Oregon Experience, and Oregon Art Beat regularly visit communities all across the state.

In addition, OPB provides our stories to news organizations free of charge and shares stories from partners via our website, radio service, and newsletters. We want to connect more people with important stories wherever they might get their news.

We're fortunate that OPB's voluntary membership model has proven resilient. Generous funds from OPB members—located in every single county of Oregon—have allowed us to expand our public service journalism in key areas of need. But we're not immune to challenges that have impacted our peers. While still strong, broadcast audiences are declining, and we're in the midst of a generational shift as we adapt our membership model to the digital age.



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We're also in a moment when the future of federal funding for public media is in jeopardy—funding critical to our primary role in the state's Emergency Alert System. Our public media values are rooted in universal service: **OPB's trusted reporting is available free of charge to everyone in our state—never behind a paywall.**

With these challenges in mind, funding through SB 686 would be a major boost to our ability to serve the public with trusted information. OPB has more than 200 employees, over 100 of whom present or publish original news or information of public interest, and would likely qualify under this legislation.

Thank you for carefully considering this important bill, and for supporting a strong future for informed, connected communities across Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rachel Smolkin'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Rachel Smolkin
OPB President and CEO