

Submitter: **Andrew DeVigal**  
On Behalf Of Committee: **Senate Committee On Rules**  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: **SB686**

Good afternoon, Chair Jama, Vice-chair Bonham, and members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Andrew DeVigal, and I am a journalism professor at the University of Oregon and Director of the Agora Journalism Center. I'm here to express my strong support for SB 686.

Recent headlines show what happens when tech platforms block access to news: hyperpartisan and misleading content rushes to fill the void. However, from our information needs assessments across Oregon, we have already seen this happening, regardless of the threats posed by tech platforms. Facebook groups filled with low-quality and misleading information are already proliferating, especially in areas with limited local coverage.

As Outlier Media founder Sarah Alvarez succinctly said, "Information gaps are where misinformation breeds and accountability goes to die."

The evolving news landscape, especially AI-powered search results, makes this even more urgent. When the Oregon State Hospital superintendent resigned, as a recent example, Lookout Eugene-Springfield broke the story; yet, it was nowhere to be found or credited in the AI-generated news summaries. This ever-changing process by the tech platforms is already eroding referral traffic to reliable newsrooms, as previous testimonies clearly highlighted.

These examples tell us two things: people have a strong desire for local news, and in its absence, they will accept what they can get, whether powered by algorithms or not. SB 686 helps ensure that what they get is high-quality, reported, truly local news—by and for Oregonians.

The bill would also create the Oregon Civic Information Consortium. At the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication, and through the Agora Journalism Center, we stand ready to support this work. Agora is a public service-focused center committed to strengthening journalism's connection to civic life. With no commercial interests, we are well-positioned to serve as a neutral, trusted facilitator, helping to support the independent board that will guide how funds are distributed to smaller, community-based news outlets and projects Oregon communities need most.

I respectfully urge your support.

Thank you.



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