

Testimony of Shasta Kearns Moore

To: Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Re: Opposition to HB 3564

Date: May 7, 2025

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 3564. My name is Shasta Kearns Moore, and I am a lifelong Oregonian with experience reporting for both local and statewide outlets here in Oregon.

I write in strong opposition to HB 3564, which I believe would have a chilling effect on vital, public-interest journalism — especially that provided by local reporters and small outlets already operating under immense pressure and dwindling resources.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates what's at stake.

Several years ago, I investigated and reported on a teacher whose license the TSPC rescinded after an inappropriate relationship with a student. That student, now an adult, came forward with detailed hard evidence that indicated apparent grooming and a cover-up by the school. I conducted exhaustive due diligence that included thorough fact-checking, seeking detailed verification and comment from all parties involved, and corroborating every claim with documentation.

What I got in return from the subject of the story was not evidence to support their version of events, but a barrage of legal threats. The teacher's attorney sent me letters warning of litigation — before the story had even run. Thankfully, I had the support of an in-house media lawyer who helped me navigate the intimidation and confirmed that we had solid legal footing. We published. And the threats disappeared. They knew the truth was on our side, and any defamation claim would not stand up in court.

But here's the problem: most journalists in Oregon don't have access to legal counsel. They're freelancers, community reporters, or small newsroom editors. And a bill like HB 3564 — which gives potential litigants *twice as much time* to craft specious legal arguments and further intimidate journalists — only increases the burden on these already vulnerable reporters. It enables delay, suppression, and fear, even when the facts are verified and the public deserves to know.

This bill assumes good faith from everyone requesting corrections, but unfortunately, bad-faith actors exist, and they often use legal threats as a tool of silencing. Journalism — especially at the local level — is already in crisis. Laws like this tip the balance even further in favor of powerful individuals who want to avoid scrutiny.

Since learning of this bill, I've confirmed that it is alarming journalists and small publishers across the state. **I urge this committee to either reject HB 3564 outright or, at minimum, refer it to an interim work group where it can be properly and thoughtfully reconsidered with input from the journalists and newsrooms it directly affects.**

Protecting the free press isn't just about lofty ideals — it's about ensuring everyday Oregonians have access to the truth. Please don't make that harder.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Shasta Kearns Moore
West Linn, OR