

NEWSBERG.

Community supported news in Newberg.

Submitter:

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Committee:

State of Oregon - Senate Committee On Rules

Oregon State Capitol
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Chair Meek, Vice Chair Drazan, and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and General Government,

My name is Branden Andersen. I am the founder and publisher of Newsberg, an independent, locally owned community news outlet serving Newberg and Dundee. I started Newsberg in April 2023 and, in that time, have published over 600 original, hyperlocal stories that inform the Newberg-Dundee community about their business community, arts, culture, events, and government. I am writing to respectfully submit testimony in opposition to SB 1580.

I want to begin by acknowledging the intent behind this bill. The financial crisis facing journalism is real, urgent, and deeply felt, especially by small local newsrooms like mine. I appreciate the Legislature's willingness to engage with this issue and to look for solutions that support civic information across Oregon.

That said, SB 1580, as currently structured, would do more harm than good for smaller, independent publishers.

First, the bill is heavily weighted toward benefiting large, legacy publishers, with insufficient consideration for the realities of independent, locally owned newsrooms working on the ground to serve their communities. The proposed distribution formula overwhelmingly favors scale and headcount, which structurally advantages large chains and legacy organizations — many with out-of-state ownership — while leaving small, rural, and underserved community newsrooms at the margins. Those small outlets are already historically underfunded, and many operate with lean or solo staffing models precisely because they are community-based and independent.

Second, the bill is being advanced without adequate time or process to fully hear from all stakeholders. Independent publishers have consistently raised concerns about similar proposals over the past year, yet there has been limited meaningful engagement with small and independent

outlets in shaping this legislation. Rushing a complex policy intervention of this magnitude risks locking in inequities that will be difficult to unwind later.

Third, the potential for platform retaliation presents a disproportionate risk to small publishers. If major platforms respond by blocking or limiting access to news content, independent outlets like mine would bear the brunt of that fallout. We lack the legal, financial, and audience diversification buffers of large organizations and would effectively become the sacrificial lambs in a dispute we did not design and cannot absorb.

Taken together, these issues make SB 1580 a blunt instrument applied to a highly nuanced ecosystem. While the bill may provide relief to some organizations, it risks consolidating power, reinforcing inequities, and destabilizing the very local news providers that are closest to their communities.

I believe there is a better path forward.

Rather than advancing SB 1580 in its current form, I urge lawmakers to convene an interim task force focused on sustainable and equitable journalism funding in Oregon. That process should bring all stakeholders to the table — including independent publishers, rural and ethnic media, nonprofit and for-profit outlets, broadcasters, digital-first newsrooms, and academic institutions — to design a policy framework that reflects the full diversity of Oregon's media landscape and serves all Oregonians.

This approach would allow the Legislature to move deliberately, build trust, and craft a bill that strengthens local journalism without unintentionally harming the most vulnerable parts of the ecosystem.

I appreciate your time, your attention to this issue, and your commitment to ensuring Oregonians have access to reliable, local civic information. I stand ready to participate constructively in any future process aimed at getting this right.

Respectfully,

Branden Andersen
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