

Written Testimony in Support of SB 1580

Submitted by the Fund for Oregon Rural Journalism (ForJ)

Chair Meek and Members of the Committee,

The Fund for Oregon Rural Journalism (ForJ) supports SB 1580 as an important step toward stabilizing Oregon's news media—particularly for independent rural, small-town, and emerging publishers that serve communities with limited access to reliable local news.

Across Oregon, locally owned news organizations are closing or operating with skeletal staff, even as the demand for trusted information, government accountability, and community connection continues to grow. Rural and small-town publishers face unique structural disadvantages: small advertising markets, limited philanthropic access, and rising technology and distribution costs. These challenges threaten not only journalism, but the civic health of the communities these outlets serve.

SB 1580 recognizes that imbalance and attempts to address it by ensuring that the value created by local journalism is more fairly shared. While the bill is not perfect, it represents a meaningful effort to respond to a market failure that disproportionately harms independent and community-based news organizations.

ForJ believes it is critical that Oregon move forward with solutions that strengthen local news capacity, protect editorial independence, and ensure that smaller publishers are not left behind as the media landscape continues to consolidate. We view SB 1580 as a constructive foundation on which further refinement and safeguards can be built.

For these reasons, we urge the Legislature to advance SB 1580 and continue working collaboratively with publishers, journalists, and community stakeholders to support a sustainable future for local news in Oregon.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Wright
President
Fund for Oregon Rural Journalism