

Written Testimony in Support of SB 1580

Chair Meek and Members of the Committee,

My name is Steph Routh, and I am writing to you today in fervent support of SB 1580, the -2 amendment.

I am the founder of a new and emerging local online independent publication called East Portland Voice. It is a source of pride that I follow in the footsteps of my great-grandmother, Mary Livezy Roberts, who was the first female editor of the Forest Grove Independent and covered the Tillamook Burn for the Associated Press. You can still listen to her article at the Tillamook Forest Center. What a moment, for an Oregonian woman's words to be the voice of a critical event in Oregon's history.

Local news is the lifeblood of a local community. It makes meaning and helps people feel that deep sense of belonging—that their communities are seen, understood, and their stories are placed into the legacy of the written word. Small community publications support democracy, and gosh do we need that more than ever in this moment.

Large tech corporations are taking the diligent work of local reporters, taking the product of that work without permission, and profiting from it. Local publications are suffering as a result, and with it the communities they serve.

As a lifelong Portlander, I have been mourning the loss of The Skanner this week, one of Oregon's only Black-owned news outlets. When I think of the voices whose perspectives and expertise will not be available to our neighbors going forward, I despair. SB 1580 is the remedy to that despair. The incentive structure of this bill is the cure for our need for robust local news coverage. Please pass SB 1580.

Thank you for your service to our communities.

Best,
Steph Routh
Founder, East Portland Voice
www.eastportlandvoice.org