



Highway 58 Herald

47581 Highway 58

Oakridge, OR 97463

February 6, 2023

To: House Committee on Rules

Re: Support for Protect Local Journalism, HB2605

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and members of the committee:

Dear Committee members;

My name is George Custer. I am the current editor for the Highway 58 Herald. The Herald is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization founded by volunteers to provide professional journalism as a free service to Oakridge and six other communities along Oregon's busiest mountain highway.

Our media platform has been created to fill a news vacuum in communities desperately in need of accurate, comprehensive and reliable information that citizens need to participate fully in community life and to stay safe in times of emergency.

Oregon's rural, underserved communities have been left behind in the ever-shrinking news and information reporting. Small, rural communities have small businesses that have small advertising budgets that cannot adequately support the requirements of professional journalism necessary to keep its citizens informed.

The Herald was initially formed because local government was preparing to push through a biased firing of an employee. The Herald broadcast the pending action to the community, who rallied support to stop the proposal.

Rural Oregon communities are starved for news and information that apply specifically to their lives. An uninformed public spell the demise of democracy.

The Highway 58 Herald supports, and asks, that HB2605 be funded.

Respectfully submitted,

George Custer, Editor

President of the Board of Directors