

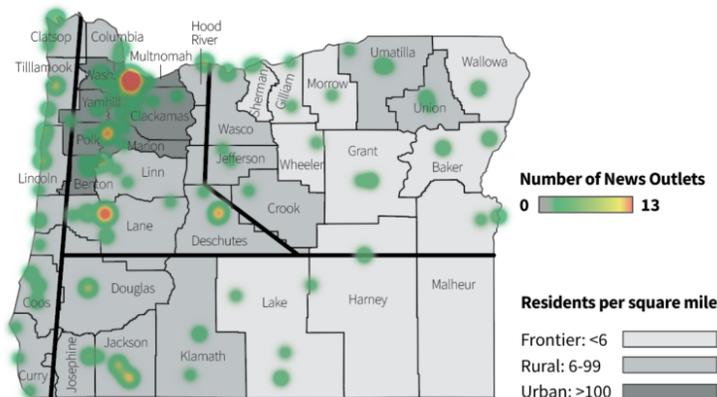
Date: February 9, 2023
To: House Committee on Rules
From: Courtney Tabor
Re: Support for Protect Local Journalism, HB 2605

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

My name is Courtney Tabor, and I reside in Eugene. I am a 4th-year Doctoral Candidate in Communication & Media Studies at the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication. I am also a co-author of the recent report "Assessing Oregon's Local News & Information Ecosystem," which was published in late 2022 by the Agora Journalism Center.

A critical aspect of our news ecosystem analysis in the Assessing Oregon report is our dynamic mapping of news outlets across the state. An interactive version of this map is available on our website,¹ but a static version is included below. As you can see from the map, there is a clear bias of news outlets throughout the Metropolitan Willamette Valley. Eastern and Southern Oregon are in desperate need of intervention, with some counties housing just three or fewer news outlets. In the report, we find that "Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Klamath, Lake, and Wallowa counties would each be left with one newspaper as their sole source for original Oregon news were it not for local stations rebroadcasting OPB and Jefferson Public Radio" (p. 39).

■ **Number of News Outlets* per County,
Accounting for Population Density**



Anecdotally, the quality and regularity of news from these sources are also not always of the caliber one would hope. Indeed, many of the news sources we looked at for this report had unsteady streams of content, recycled stories from other sources (e.g., AP wire or police scanners), or nothing available at all. Thus, there are concerns about both the quantity and quality of local journalism available to Oregonians at a time when crises abound; between the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapidly changing climate, and the tenuousness of our democracy, Oregonians need information they can rely on to help them make sense of the world.

¹ <https://agorajournalism.center/newsecosystem22/interactive-map/>

Furthermore, the state of ethnic media in Oregon appears to additionally be in decline. One of Portland's longest-standing Black-owned newspapers, *The Skanner*, recently had to cease newspaper publication and move to an online-only model because of the high costs of print. Additionally, despite Spanish speakers in every county in Oregon,² we only identified four Spanish-language outlets in Oregon. Similarly, we only identified one Chinese-language outlet despite government data indicating Chinese speakers living in at least 12 counties. Many languages are missing from Oregon's ecosystem entirely, such as Vietnamese and Ukrainian.

All of this considered, Protect Local Journalism, HB 2605 is an important piece of legislation for the future of Oregon's news ecosystem. This Bill generates critical funding for extended research and interventions by reputable bodies, such as the Agora Journalism Center and Oregon Rural Journalism. Journalism is a critical function of democracy and providing public funding for this demonstrates the Oregon legislature's commitment to this cause. A commitment to advancing the needs of local journalists and the information ecosystem is a commitment to providing Oregonians with credible information that holds leaders accountable and provides life-saving information on issues like public health and wildfires.

For these reasons, I urge your support for Protecting Local Journalism and urge the measure be funded fully. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Courtney D. Tabor
Doctoral Candidate
University of Oregon

² <https://www.oregon.gov/languages/pages/common-language-county.aspx>