

Submitter: Patty Wentz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2605

To the Committee,

As a graduate of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication and a former local radio and print reporter, I am writing in strong favor of HB 2605 to not only protect local journalism, but also to expand it to include the voices of communities who have too long been underrepresented in mainstream journalism.

The decline of local journalism in Oregon is detrimental to the public having accurate and timely information about the powerful institutions that directly affect the lives of their families, whether that be local corporate polluters, extreme school board members who are out of step with community values, or statewide policies that are passed with little local engagement because no one knew they were happening.

Today there are not enough journalism resources to even adequately cover public city council meetings, school board meetings, county commission meetings, let alone do the leg work and digging necessary for beat reporting, investigative and advocacy journalism. Our local journalists are stretched too thin and their newsrooms are under-resourced. The lack of beat reporting has resulted in coverage that is focused almost exclusively on wrongdoing and where the day-to-day work of public servants is largely ignored and certainly misunderstood. Watchdog journalism is essential. But equally essential is journalism that helps people better understand how corporate and government power works beyond the headlines of scandals. Better resourced and more diverse newsrooms can help provide essential insights to communities and voters to increase public engagement and improve the health of our institutions and democracy.

Thank you for hearing this important bill to protect local journalism and I urge support of HB 2605.