



Date: February 10, 2023

To: House Committee on Rules

From: Regina Lawrence, School of Journalism & Communication, University of Oregon

Re: Support for Protect Local Journalism, HB 2605

Dear Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee,

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee yesterday to express our support for HB 2605. In answer to questions asked about the media policies that our proposed research would explore, allow me to provide this additional information and context:

- Around the country, momentum is gathering for bold solutions to stem the loss of local news. These solutions will need to involve private/philanthropic funding and smart business model innovations by newsrooms. But government also has an important role to play in crafting policies that encourage the production and dissemination of quality, inclusive local news – in other words, in creating a more robust [civic information infrastructure](#).
- One of organizations leading this effort at the national level is [Rebuilding Local News](#), a nonpartisan, nonprofit coalition of over 3,000 news and journalism organizations. Read their 5 guiding principles for creating public policy to support local news without threatening journalistic independence [here](#).
- The range of policies being explored in some states around the country include:
 - tax credits for news consumers subscriptions, [newsroom job creation](#), etc.;
 - [advertising](#) policies that direct government advertising budgets to community media
 - “[replanting](#)” local news outlets that are in danger of being acquired by hedge funds
 - government [grants](#) targeted toward building civic information capacity in underserved communities
 - ...and more
- And while the concept of government stepping in to provide for a healthier local news ecosystem might seem unfamiliar, it’s actually happened throughout US history, as political scientist Joshua Darr outlines in [this short essay](#) for Nieman Reports.
 - Examples include establishing lower postal rates for newspapers in the early decades of our country; FCC licensing of noncommercial, locally based radio stations; and the creation of public broadcasting in the 1960s.



If funded through HB2605, the Agora Journalism Center will deeply research these and other proposed solutions to the local news crisis to see how they are being implemented in other states and what we know thus far about their impacts and challenges. We will also conduct a series of listening sessions and focus groups to learn about local information needs from Oregonians across our state, and consult with national thought leaders and practitioners as well. Synthesizing prior research with this fresh work, we will craft a set of clear, well-researched policy proposals that take account of the unique culture, geography, and information needs of our state.

Sincerely,

Regina Lawrence