

House Finance

03/21/2022 01:30 PM

HB22-1121 Supporting Local Media

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Ingrid Moore Amend Self	<p>Hello Members of the Committee and Bill Sponsors,</p> <p>I am in favor of the main elements of this bill, in that supporting local media is CRITICAL for saving our democracy from misinformation and to connect people to their local communities, which helps mitigate the "us vs them" attitude being promoted on certain national media sites.</p> <p>However, I could not find a suitable definition of "local media"! I would encourage an amendment to further define local media to exclude those publications that, while distributed locally (e.g. Denver Post) are actually owned by large conglomerate media corporations. I do NOT want to support them!</p> <p>Please consider this suggested amendment!</p> <p>Thank you!</p>
Ingrid Moore Amend Self	<p>Hello Members of the Committee and Bill Sponsors,</p> <p>I am in favor of the main elements of this bill, in that supporting local media is CRITICAL for saving our democracy from misinformation and to connect people to their local communities, which helps mitigate the "us vs them" attitude being promoted on certain national media sites.</p> <p>However, I could not find a suitable definition of "local media" in the bill! I would encourage an amendment to further define local media to exclude those publications that, while distributed locally (e.g. Denver Post) are actually owned by large conglomerate media corporations. I do NOT want to support them!</p> <p>Please consider this suggested amendment!</p> <p>Thank you!</p>

REBUILD LOCAL NEWS

Testimony of Anna Brugmann, public policy associate at the Rebuild Local News Coalition

Rebuild Local News is a coalition of 17 national organizations committed to strengthening local news. The coalition's groups represent more than 3,000 newsrooms, and includes publishers, labor unions, rural and urban, mainstream and ethnic, publications small, medium and large.

The Rebuild Local News Coalition strongly supports HB 22-1121. By passing HB 22-1121, Colorado lawmakers would be joining nearly a dozen other states taking dynamic steps to support their local press. New York, New Jersey, Virginia and Wisconsin have all introduced legislation similar to HB 22-1121. There is also legislation in multiple states to create grant programs to further augment the capacities of the local news media. Policies of this sort are also indicative of a years-long trend. In 2018 New Jersey created a state grant program to support sources of local information. In 2019, Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City signed an executive order that allocated 50% of municipal advertising budgets to local community media, many of which serve communities of color. New York City made that executive order permanent in 2021. California incorporated a similar provision into its budget in 2021.

These policies are timely and vital. The funding model for local print journalism, long built on a robust foundation of local advertising and local circulation, has collapsed. Nationally, advertising in newspapers has declined 80% since 2000 based on statistics from the Pew Research Center. Print circulation is also down 54% nationally since 2004, according to the University of North Carolina. Colorado is among the states that have seen the most dramatic declines — losing 56% of its local print circulation. Nationally, newspapers have lost 36,000 journalists since 2004, according to the University of North Carolina, but a 2019 report from Duke University showed newspapers are still among the top producers of local information. The field is innovating, especially in Colorado, but not fast enough to make up the losses.

This decline is happening in the context of mounting national polarization, but the effects — decreased political awareness and engagement — are observed most acutely at the local level. Voter turnout for national elections has increased in the last 25 years. However, media scholars Jennifer L. Lawless and Danny Hayes point out, “municipal turnout since the mid-twentieth century in places such as Chicago and Philadelphia look like the screaming descents of amusement park roller coasters.” In 2016, only 40 percent of voters could name their city's mayor compared to 70 percent 50 years prior.

The trends might be national, but the painful effects to democracy and community are local. The policies to address the problem should be local as well. I urge Colorado to join the growing group of state lawmakers addressing the collapse of local journalism with smart, content neutral policies by passing HB 22-1121.