Testimony in Support of HB 5978

Dear Members of the Finance Committee:

As a lifelong Connecticut resident, I write today in strong support of HB 5978, a bill that would provide a refundable tax credit to news organizations covering local communities. This legislation is not about benefiting the press; it is about ensuring that Connecticut communities continue to have access to reliable, local news—news that informs voters, strengthens civic engagement, and holds public officials accountable.

The decline of local news is not theoretical. I have worked in publishing for over 30 years and witnessed it firsthand. Since 2000, newspaper advertising revenue has dropped by 81%, leading to the closure of over 2,000 newspapers nationwide—including many here in Connecticut. The consequences of this loss are real: lower voter turnout, decreased civic engagement, and a growing disconnect between residents and their local government. Without strong local journalism, we all suffer.

Some may argue that the government should not be involved in funding the press. However, public support for journalism is nothing new. Connecticut already funds public notices (legal notices) and public broadcasting, both of which provide vital information to residents without compromising editorial independence. This bill follows in that tradition, offering a structured, transparent, and fair way to reinvest in news organizations that serve Connecticut communities.

This bill does not pick winners and losers—it is open to a broad range of news organizations, including both nonprofit and for-profit outlets, ensuring that diverse voices remain part of our media landscape.

If we fail to act, Connecticut risks losing more local news outlets to out-of-state corporate interests that do not prioritize our communities. Passing HB 5978 is a step toward reversing that trend, strengthening local journalism, and, most importantly, serving the people of Connecticut.

I urge you to support this bill and take a stand for strong, independent local news—because when local journalism thrives, so do our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Vira Mamchur Schwartz
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Director of Special Projects
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