



**TESTIMONY ON  
HOUSE BILL 1291  
NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING ACT**

Presented to the House Local Government Committee

By  
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Chairman Freeman, Chairman Miller, and members of the House Local Government Committee, good morning. My name is Frank Mazza and I serve as the Director of Government Relations for the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP). CCAP is a non-profit, non-partisan association representing all 67 counties in the commonwealth, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide remarks on House Bill 1291

Counties have long supported legislation that provides counties and other local governments with a menu of options to modernize outdated advertising requirements, reduce costs to taxpayers, and improve access to public information. Such legislation would allow local governments to electronically publish legal notices in lieu of newspaper advertisements as the sole option, due to transparency and access concerns.

### **Position on HB 1291 (PN 1466)**

While counties strongly support the goal of modernizing Pennsylvania's outdated public notice laws, CCAP must respectfully oppose HB 1291 as currently drafted. We believe the bill falls short of providing the real flexibility and cost savings that local governments and taxpayers urgently need.

### **Transparency and Access Concerns**

Counties agree that public notices must remain broadly accessible, especially as we continue to evolve in a technology-focused world. Under HB 1291, counties would still be tied to legacy print newspapers as the primary vehicle for meeting statutory requirements, even as circulation declines and publication schedules dwindle, which is concerning for counties due to timing and logistical reasons. For many counties, getting a notice in print can still take three or four days—while electronic posting could occur immediately, with searchable archives and subscription alerts, creating broader access to the general public who may not have newspaper subscriptions or access. HB 1291 does not fully recognize these realities of the current day in age.

Counties are committed to transparency and accountability. But the landscape of information-sharing has changed dramatically: fewer residents rely on print newspapers for their news, while digital access continues to expand. As circulation declines, some counties struggle with limited or no daily newspaper coverage, leading to delays of several days in publishing required notices. By contrast, counties can post notices on their websites almost instantly, and many already use tools like subscription alerts, email, RSS feeds, and searchable archives to ensure public access. In Pennsylvania, all 67 counties have publicly accessible websites for residents to access information on county news, information and happenings, including many who currently post public advertisements online without a current requirement to do so in the name of transparency and access.

Electronic notice also expands reach. For example, here in Dapuhin County, the county's publicly accessible Facebook page has more than 12,000 followers engaging with county content. Bradford County in the northern tier of the state, a rural county with just under 60,000 residents, has a publicly accessible Facebook page with nearly 4,400 followers.

Many residents increasingly expect to receive government information online, and counties are prepared to meet that demand.

### **Cost Burden on Counties**

Counties are already devoting significant taxpayer resources to mandated newspaper ads. Recent county data illustrate this wide and growing burden:

- **Blair County** reported spending \$280,580.17 in 2024 on public notices.
- **Northumberland County** reported annual spending of more than **\$90,000** for 107 required ads in 2024.
- **Berks County** spent more than **\$117,000** in the last year for 117 notices.
- Even mid-sized counties such as **Centre** spent over **\$6,200**, and smaller counties like **Snyder** paid nearly **\$14,000**.

These are not small sums. They are dollars diverted from direct services like emergency management, human services, election administration and public safety. HB 1291 does little to alleviate these costs because it maintains the printed newspaper mandate as the foundation of public notice.

### **Needed Reforms**

For years, counties have asked for true flexibility: the option to meet public notice obligations through official local government websites, digital subscriptions, or other digital platforms that residents already rely on. We emphasize that modernization should not eliminate print options where they remain effective—but counties should not be forced to purchase costly newspaper ads as the gateway to transparency.

### **Conclusion**

Counties share the General Assembly's interest in ensuring public notices remain open, accessible, and transparent. But HB 1291, as written, does not provide the meaningful modernization that is needed. We urge the sponsor and Committee to work with counties and our local government partners to craft legislation that both preserves access and allows flexibility—so we can deliver transparency to our residents while being good stewards of limited taxpayer resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.