DRAFT LETTER in SUPPORT OF THE LOCAL JOURNALISM SUSTAINABILITY ACT, HR 7640

Dear (Congressman/woman):

On behalf of local community newspapers, we write to seek your support of HR 7640, which would set up tax credits to sustain journalism in our towns. Most in Washington have noticed the steady disappearance of local newspapers. We hope you agree that losing a newspaper at any time is a terrible event. But losing a newspaper during an election year in a pandemic is the worst news of all.

An issue brief describing the bill is attached.

We would like you to consider also our own observations.

Newspapers have traditionally been extremely reluctant to seek government support because of fear of censorship and content controls. The tax credits in HR 7640 put the choice in local hands and allows decisions to be made without content controls by the federal government. Decisions to subscribe or advertise would be left to the people in our communities.

We are the only eyes and ears on local government in most cities, towns, counties and school districts. No one else sends reporters to county fairs, school sports, church events and political town halls. Usually the only time national media parachute in is during a disaster. Without us, transparency is lost and the current unsettling trends to distrust all news/entertainment and political bodies will only be exacerbated.

The issue brief reports the losses of 1,800 newspapers from 2004-2018. That report is understated because many country weeklies are not included in national estimates. Also not included are numerous ethnic, civic, agricultural and neighborhood journals. The losses are deeper than Washington can see. What Washington also cannot see is the hundreds of dedicated reporters and editors who have fought to get the news out during recessions, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, civic unrest, local shootings and other disasters. We have been working very hard. We are tired. We need your support.

This bill is essential and it is needed right now. We hope you will not only sign onto the bill as a co-sponsor but communicate to your leadership that we need action. We appreciate your consideration and are looking forward to working with you.

Sincerely,