



The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

As leaders of community foundations, we are trusted partners to charitably minded people in hometowns across America. The places we serve range from urban to suburban to rural, yet we all share the mission of improving quality of life neighborhood-by-neighborhood and person-to-person.

It is from that local perspective that we are writing to raise the alarm that many of our efforts to improve the general welfare in the places we serve are in jeopardy. A full-blown crisis in the business of local news production is becoming a quality-of-life disaster for America's communities.

The drop in the number of reporters — a 60% decline since 2000 — means thousands of communities have been turned into news deserts. For thousands more, the range of daily news offerings has shrunk and quality has diminished.

Local news vacuums are rapidly being filled by social media, partisan hyperbole and harmful disinformation. Without professionally developed, fact-based news and information, residents are not equipped to make decisions on important issues for themselves. This leaves entire communities without information to address problems or identify opportunities for their best development. Democracy itself is endangered.

As we know from our experience working on issues at the local level – public health, affordable housing, air and water quality, and education improvement among them – none of these can be addressed successfully without the record-keeping and accountability provided by professional journalists.

Many of us have provided substantial funding for efforts to replace what has been lost in the implosion of local news production, but the problems are too big and complex for

philanthropy to do it alone. Saving local news will require some help from the federal government.

That's why we have come together in support of the Local Journalism Sustainability Act. Now under consideration by Congress, we see it as a sensible way to direct government funding to benefit local communities without having government control the news.

The proposal is all about infusing much-needed revenue into local journalism producers through tax incentives. The key benefit is a \$25,000 refundable payroll tax credit for local news organizations to help pay journalists they hire.

In our network of community foundations covering every region of the country, there are many instances in which individual foundations have advocated for government assistance to recover from crises affecting their communities. The loss of local news coverage hurts all of our communities. While we recognize that the Local Journalism Sustainability Act is not a panacea for all problems of the news industry, we see it as an essential lifeline of reliable revenue as the work continues to build sustainable models.

We urge you and all members of Congress to support the Build Back Better legislation, which includes at least one of the tax incentives originally envisioned in the LJSa. We join with one voice in this request because we know that the future health of the neighborhoods and communities we serve depends on a healthy local news-and-information ecosystem.

Respectfully,

Lisa Schroeder, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Pittsburgh PA

Cali Brooks, Adirondack Foundation, Lake Placid, NY

Kevin K. Murphy, Berks County Community Foundation, Berks, PA

JoAnn Turnquist, Central Carolina Community Foundation, Columbia, SC

Brian Payne, Central Indiana Community Foundation, Indianapolis, IN

Douglas Kridler, Columbus Foundation, Columbus, OH

Mariam Noland, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Detroit, MI

Theresa Grimison, Community Foundation for Brevard, Melbourne, FL

Mark Brewer, Central Florida Foundation, Orlando, FL

Nina Waters, Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, Jacksonville, FL

Elizabeth Brazas, Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Asheville, NC

Matthew Randazzo, Dallas Foundation, Dallas, TX

Carrie Pickett-Erway, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Kalamazoo, MI

Laura Seaman, League of California Community Foundations, CA

Gian Brosco, Nevada Community Foundation, Las Vegas, NV

Shelly Prichard, Wichita Community Foundation, Wichita, KS