



Members of the House Local Government Committee,

On behalf of the undersigned local government associations, we are writing to express our **opposition to House Bills 1291 and 2146.**

Local governments fully support keeping their communities informed of their actions and operations, knowing that public engagement is necessary to have an effective and transparent system of open government. However, House Bill 1291 fails to bring public notice requirements into the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it does not provide local governments with the flexibility to reach more of their constituents where they get their information and to be nimble and efficient in responding to urgent matters which would ultimately save taxpayers and ratepayers money.

The recent announcement that the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette will publish its final print edition on May 3, 2026, has brought Pennsylvania's antiquated public notice requirements to the forefront for many of our members, particularly in and around Allegheny County where they will now struggle to comply with a 50-year-old state law which requires public notices be placed in printed newspapers of general circulation.

As the number and frequency of printed newspapers have declined, purchasing print advertising has not only become more expensive, but local governments have been forced to plan their meetings around a newspaper's print schedule. This inefficiency can result in costly delays in construction projects, finalizing contracts, taking action on personnel matters, or responding to the health and safety issues.

House Bill 1291 is being promoted as a modernization of our public notice requirements; however, our organizations oppose the approach taken in HB 1291 because the flexibility it intends to provide local governments is largely illusory. For example, the mere existence of a weekly printed newspaper in an area would prevent local governments from taking advantage of any other option or realizing any efficiencies from the bill. Only if a printed newspaper does not exist may a local government look to advertise in a digital newspaper. But even then, the digital

newspaper must either distribute or have an ownership interest in a print newspaper, be capable of printing a newspaper, or be the digital descendant of a print newspaper. That does not provide local governments with the flexibility needed to live in a digital age where the prevalence of the Internet and digital devices has undoubtedly changed news and information consumption.

Additionally, this bill excludes other digital platforms such as agency websites, where communities can quickly and easily find information about their local governments. If members of the public are interested in what their county, school district, township, borough, or municipal authority is doing, what better place to go than the agency's website? News and information consumption preferences have changed, and government needs to adapt and change with it.

While we can certainly sympathize with the plight of newspapers and the impact that the potential loss of advertising revenue may have on their bottom lines, local governments should not be used to provide taxpayer or ratepayer subsidies to newspapers in the form of advertising and public notice fees.

House Bill 2146 represents a reaction to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's interpretation of the plain language of Act 65 of 2021 which allows local governing bodies to add an item to a meeting agenda with a majority vote. The final language of Act 65 was the result of a series of negotiations between the sponsor of the bill that became Act 65 and our local government associations which were intended to provide transparency and accountability for meeting agendas, but yet still allow local governments to quickly act to address unexpected matters that come up after a meeting agenda has been published.

If an unexpected matter was to arise during a meeting, under House Bill 2146, the local governing body would be required to schedule and provide public notice for another meeting. While some local governing body members are paid for their service, school directors in particular are not paid for their service, and the bill would require these dedicated volunteers to dedicate more of their personal time to meetings. This is neither productive nor needed.

Local governments routinely encounter important issues that surface after an agenda is published. While most of these issues are not emergencies, they are time sensitive and could be addressed at the current meeting, rather than a future one. Although Local governments try to act with efficiency and foresight, it is that is not always possible to think of every possible issue to be considered at a meeting. Without the ability to amend an agenda in a public meeting, governing bodies will have delayed actions, need to hold additional special meetings at taxpayer expense, or fail to meet immediate community needs.

Ultimately, HB 2146 would make the role of local government more difficult and inefficient.

We respectfully ask for your no vote on House Bills 1291 and 2146.

Sincerely,

County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors

Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Pennsylvania Municipal League

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners

Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association