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The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Chair, U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Competition Policy, Antitrust and
Consumer Rights
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kennedy
437 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Klobuchar and Senator Kennedy:

We, the undersigned Attorneys General, write in support of S. 1094, the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act of 2023. Local news outlets are critical resources for our states and communities, and are vital for a healthy democracy. This includes regional journalism, as well as journalism by and for Black, Indigenous, and people of color, including ethnic media organizations. These organizations are critical to our communities as they have the greatest capacity to identify, investigate, and report on issues that directly affect them.

Therefore, we are deeply concerned that local news organizations across the country continue to struggle because of significantly reduced revenues, media consolidation, and a growing reliance on online news to serve these roles. According to the Pew Research Center, newsroom employment at newspapers nationwide fell by about 40,000 between 2008 and 2020. Researchers at Northwestern University's Medill School found that since 2005, the country has lost more than a fourth of its newspapers (2,500) and is on track to lose a third by 2025. While there can be value to online news platforms – such as community-focused online digital publishers that serve geographically remote or ethnically diverse regions – this should not come at the expense of local outlets that provide an irreplaceable role in their communities.

For example, local newspapers are responsible for half of our country's original reporting, although they only account for one-quarter of media outlets. In many rural communities, local news organizations provide the only information and updates about issues affecting their community. At a time where distrust of institutions and media in particular is growing across our country, the role of local news organizations has become

critical to rebuilding trust. Local news can achieve this through understanding and reporting on localized needs and concerns, and investigating issues that may not get attention from larger news organizations without local ties.

In order to address the financial inequities facing local news organizations in Washington State, the Washington Attorney General's Office proposed state legislation this year that would exempt Washington newspapers and eligible online news outlets from the state business and occupation tax. This legislation passed with nearly unanimous support, and will save jobs and protect a critical community service. However, this is just one step in taking the necessary actions to protect newsrooms across our country. Federal action is needed.

For this reason, we are writing to express our support for the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act of 2023. This bill will address the power imbalance between local news outlets and large online platforms, and will allow local news outlets to work together to negotiate fairer compensation from the large online platforms that profit off their work. We support efforts to strengthen this bill by ensuring that the negotiated funds are reinvested back into local journalism. Additionally, S. 1094 will prohibit retaliation by large online platforms against local outlets for participating in joint negotiations or arbitration, and provide the outlets a private right of action for violations of this prohibition.

The Journalism Competition and Preservation Act of 2023 is an important and necessary step to addressing the challenges affecting local news organizations across the country. Thank you for your ongoing leadership to protect and support local journalism. We urge Congress to pass this legislation, and look forward to continuing to work with you to preserve the health of local journalism going forward.

Sincerely,



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