



September 21, 2022

Senator Cory Booker
717 Hart Senate
Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Journalism Competition and Preservation Act

Dear Senator Booker,

The collapse of the news industry is a collapse of the labor market in the industry. Why do we know? We're part of the fastest growing union in North America, where thousands of media workers are unionizing to protect their jobs and improve their pay, benefits and working conditions. And we write with an ask that the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act be improved to direct revenue to be spent on retaining and hiring more local journalists.

Our Local, The NewsGuild of New York, represents over 200 editorial employees at Gannett publications in NY and NJ: the Democrat & Chronicle (Rochester, NY) The Observer-Dispatch/Times Telegram (Utica, NY), The Journal News (Westchester, NY), The Times Herald-Record (Middletown, NY), the Poughkeepsie Journal (Poughkeepsie, NY) The Record , Daily Record and NJ Herald (North Jersey) and the Asbury Park Press, Home News Tribune, Courier News (Central Jersey and the Jersey Shore). We also represent digital producers in Gannett's Atlantic Digital Optimization Team.

Our members — America's journalists, editorial, and media workers — are supposed to be the people whose work this bill supports. U.S. newsroom employment has fallen 26% since 2008, with newspaper newsroom employment falling 57%. But we are concerned that JCPA attempts to level the economic playing field between news publishers and large tech platforms while failing to account for the corporate consolidation that has already taken place among a handful of massive media companies controlled by hedge funds, private equity and other Wall Street investors.

We ask that you support improvements to JCPA that will dedicate a solid majority of money received through bargaining or arbitration to retaining and hiring local journalists. It's a simple improvement that will protect and increase the number of journalists covering regional and local news.

Gannett has decimated local newsrooms across the country and our region has not been immune to the company's slash-to-the-bone business mode.

Since 2016, Gannett editorial employees in North Jersey at The Record, the Daily Record and the NJ Herald have witnessed more than half of their colleagues lose their jobs, with cuts of over 250 people. Staffers who were unceremoniously laid off include a 30-year-veteran reporter who was



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forced to take a buyout after missing a single email to opt out of the process and a reporter nearly nine months pregnant.

In Central Jersey and on the Jersey Shore, Gannett newsrooms have been gutted, reducing a staff that once numbered in the hundreds down to a team of less than 50 journalists tasked with covering issues that impact more than 3 million residents.

Our members have lost their jobs while on vacation, on disability, and even while on company-mandated furloughs. Reporters with decades of experience have been forced to re-apply for their own jobs, while others take on greater responsibilities without additional compensation. The journalists who have survived these cuts often receive wages and benefits from Gannett that are not enough to make ends meet in one of the most expensive areas in the country, pushing them to other outlets or out of journalism entirely.

In contrast to Gannett's deliberate starving of resources, our members have continued to dedicate themselves to reporting—in the midst of a global pandemic—critical and ongoing news events that directly impact the communities they serve: COVID-19 and its attendant public health crisis, the economic downturn, and a long-overdue reckoning on racial justice. During this time, Gannett's CFO was given a \$600,000 bonus for “working through the pandemic,” and the company recently revealed its CEO receives nearly \$8 million in annual compensation. Meanwhile Gannett gave our members the “collective sacrifice” of unpaid furloughs, a vanishing 401(k) match, and advice on buying bike helmets as protective gear when covering protests. Many of our members in NY and NJ qualify for public assistance programs and suffer from food and housing insecurity because of Gannett's historically abysmal pay practices.

All of this amounts to a tremendous loss of the public trust Gannett, as a news organization, is expected to hold.

As Sen. Alex Padilla told the committee on September 8, 2022, “we need to ensure that workers actually benefit, and not just the hedge funds and other wealthy owners that have bought up so many local newspapers and are stripping them bare.”

We ask that you please support improvements to the legislation so that it helps journalists instead of corporate executives and Wall Street investors.

Our democracy depends on journalism. There is no journalism without journalists.

Sincerely,

Susan DeCarava
President
The NewsGuild of New York, TNG-CWA Local 31003

