

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

July 31, 2020

Senator Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Over 30,000 journalists have been furloughed or laid off since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Layoffs have been particularly severe at local newspapers, whose business models are more heavily dependent on ad revenue. In fact, the COVID-19 crisis has forced the closure of over 50 papers, a devastating loss not just for the laid off journalists, but for their communities, who are losing out on life-saving coverage of local health guidance, the spread of the disease, and public policies addressing education, social services, and more. We commend you for introducing the Local News and Emergency Information Act (S. 3718), a bill that would make local radio and TV stations eligible for loans under the Paycheck Protection Program.

S. 3718 would make local newspapers and local radio and TV stations eligible for PPP loans as long as the individual physical location of the outlet that applies for funding meets SBA's separate size standards – fewer than 1,000 employees for newspapers and less than \$41.5 million in gross receipts for broadcasters. The funding would have to be used to produce local news, information, content, or emergency information, and to keep local reporters and those who support them on the job. Importantly, the bill ensures that no portion of the funds could be transferred to the parent company or used for other purposes, thus ensuring that the funds would be used to support local jobs and reporting.

Thank you again for introducing this important bill. We urge Congress to enact the Local News and Emergency Information act as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



William Samuel,
Director, Government Affairs

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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