



Massachusetts Municipal Lawyers Association

"Dedicated to Effective Local Government Through the Advancement of Municipal Law"

February 1, 2024

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To: The Honorable Senator James B. Eldridge, Chair, Joint Committee on
Judiciary
The Honorable Representative Michael Day, Chair, Joint Committee
on Judiciary

Re: HB1723 (SB1137) - An Act relative to legal advertisements in online-only
newspapers

Dear Chairs Eldridge and Day:

I am writing to you in my capacity as the President of the Massachusetts Municipal Lawyers Association ("MMLA"), the Commonwealth's municipal bar association to communicate our support of HB1723 (S1137) - An Act relative to legal advertisements in online-only newspapers.

These bills would authorize the use of a new outlet for the publication of legal notices: online-only newspapers.

Currently, the General Laws provide that if a statute, ordinance, by-law or judicial order requires publication of a legal notice, the notice must appear in: (i) a newspaper's print publication; (ii) on the newspaper's website; and (iii) on the statewide website, maintained as a repository for such notices. These bills would authorize publication in an online-only newspaper, that does not offer a print edition.

Among the many negative outcomes caused by the spiraling decline in local news media, is an increasingly constrained landscape for the print publication of legal notices. Most cities and towns in Massachusetts are without local daily print coverage, and the print publications that do survive are getting by with smaller newsrooms that are spread thin, and lower readership.

One bright spot in the otherwise dire local media landscape is the growth of online-only publications that have sprouted up to fill the void. In dozens of cities and towns across Massachusetts, the best source for local news, and often the only source of true local coverage may be an online-only publication.

The modest changes in this bill would allow legal notice to be posted in a place where many Massachusetts residents are getting their news, increasing the chance that such notices are actually seen. Notice may still be posted in a print publication and this bill will simply increase publication outlets for those who are required to publish legal notices.

We hope the Joint Committee on Judiciary will report these bills favorably. Thank you for your time and attention to these comments.

Sincerely,

/s/ Karis L. North

Karis L. North
President, MMLA

cc: The Honorable Senator Lydia M. Edwards, Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Representative Christine Barber, Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Judiciary