

Dear Senators Glazer, Blakespear, Hurtado, Laird, McGuire, Padilla, Stern, Weiner and Skinner, and Assemblymembers Wicks, Bryan and Lowenthal, and Gov. Newsom,

This letter is to strongly oppose the [draft agreement](#) related to public funding of newsrooms as it stands, express our support for legislation similar to SB 1327 and AB 886, and to advocate for a role for the California State University journalism programs in any funding or legislation that is passed to supporting newsrooms.

The CSUs are the largest four-year university system in the country and among the most diverse socio-economically and racially – with a proven track record when it comes to student success and [upward mobility](#). Twenty-two of the 23 CSU campuses house [student-produced media](#), including newspapers, magazines, digital publications and radio/television outlets, extensively covering their campuses and surrounding communities. The CSUs have 19 undergraduate journalism programs and most of our students are California Community College system grads.

The original versions of the legislation would have made a huge difference in preserving news, bolstering democracy and civic engagement and battling misinformation but as the new draft proposal stands, there are too many potential problems and too many key players left out of the discussion. This includes the CSUs, which collectively train more journalism students than any single university in California.

If the bill ultimately includes funding for new training programs (such as the [\\$15 million](#) noted in a recent version of the bill or the \$250 million mentioned in the [draft agreement](#) announced by Assemblymember Wicks), we are confident the CSU journalism programs are well-positioned to administer a training or fellowship program for early-career journalists to benefit local newsrooms, especially with support from our chancellor's office. The chancellor's office already runs a similar [entertainment media alliance](#).

The CSU journalism chairs and program directors meet monthly, collaborate often and are eager to do so on future state-funded journalism programs, much like the \$25 million (SB 911) state-funded [California Local News Fellowship](#) housed at UC Berkeley. Two CSU journalism chairs have been on the board of the fellowship program and four others have helped vet applications. Since many of our programs run our own internship programs and partnerships with newsrooms, we are well-equipped to lead or help with any future state-funded programs.

Our programs are already serving local communities' news deserts and training future journalists, as evidenced by CSU community news outlets, such as the one [online](#) and [on air](#) at Cal State LA, and [Al Dia](#) a student-produced Spanish-language newscast at CSU Fullerton. At CSU Northridge, faculty are developing a framework for student-led collaborations with local news outlets in print/digital and broadcast, specifically to address the [ever-shrinking commercial news media throughout California](#). And at San Francisco State, the Journalism Department serves as independent monitor of a City of San Francisco program to direct a portion of city advertising and social media spending toward community and ethnic media.

No matter what happens, we encourage you to involve more universities around the state, particularly CSUs (and our close partners, the CCCs), as we are well-positioned in urban and rural areas around the state. And there are pitfalls with running the program through only one university. Here is an example: Though we are grateful to be represented with two members on the UC Berkeley's California Local News fellowship board, our perspective often doesn't influence final outcomes. Here are two quick examples. First, we pointed out to the Berkeley fellowship organizers that more weight should be given on the rubric used to vet fellowship applicants to journalists who live in or have experience covering California's communities since it's funded by state taxpayers (like many CSU/CCC grads) but no changes were made. In

addition, when a draft of the second cohort of newsrooms was released to the fellowship advisory board, only three newsrooms in L.A. County (or 7.5% of 40 newsrooms) were included, though L.A. County makes up about one-quarter of the [state's](#) 2023 population with [9.7 million residents](#). And two of the three are ethnic media newsrooms that have highly specialized language requirements (Cambodian and Arabic), which rules out nearly all of the top graduates from the local CSU and community college programs. Diversity around the state is an important aspect of the fellowship program, so we pointed all of that out and were dismayed when we did not receive a response from Berkeley's program leaders about this other than they would look into it. No additional SoCal newsrooms were added. We understand the program leaders have many priorities and appreciate that they included CSU members on the board, but ultimately, it's one university making the decisions and we believe a coalition would be more effective in representing a broader range of residents' interests.

The CSUs have joined forces before to create a statewide entertainment alliance benefitting our students and the CSU journalism chairs meet and collaborate frequently to improve outcomes for our students. We are confident we could improve the program and ensure equity for early-career journalists and newsrooms around the state if we are involved.

Please let us know if you have questions and any advice for ensuring our students and alumni have a voice at the table.

Signed,

Janell Bauer, Department of Journalism & Public Relations Chair, Chico State University

Stephanie Bluestein, Chair, Department of Journalism, California State University, Northridge

Nancy Cheever, Journalism Program Coordinator, California State University, Dominguez Hills

John Delacruz, Director, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, San Jose State University

Jennifer Fleming, Chair, Department of Journalism & Public Relations, Cal State Long Beach

Jesse Garnier, Department of Journalism Chair, San Francisco State University

Julie Patel Liss, Head of Journalism, Cal State LA

Micheal McAlexander, Acting Chair, Department of Communications, California State University, Fullerton

Kirby Moss, Journalism & Mass Media Program Leader, Cal Poly Humboldt

Md Abu Naser, Chair, Department of Communications, California State University, Bakersfield

Temple Northup, School of Journalism & Media Studies Director, San Diego State University

Faith Sidlow, Chair, Department of Media, Communications & Journalism, California State University, Fresno

Brady Teufel, Chair, Journalism Department, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo