

Government Administration and Elections Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5343 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE REPORTING OF ADVERTISING PURCHASED BY

Title: THE STATE.

Vote Date: 3/11/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/4/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would enhance transparency in how state agencies are spending their dollars regarding advertising. Local media has been on a downward trend for multiple years now and the state of Connecticut when it advertises should show some deference to local papers in relation to national media conglomerates. This could allow residents to see and then have the state direct money to more local papers that are struggling when the state decides to spend on advertising.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Michelle Gilman, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services

DAS supports the goal of increasing transparency in state advertising spending but argues the bill's reporting requirements are impractical under the current system.

State agencies use a centralized contract where outside vendors manage advertising campaigns and pay media outlets directly, meaning detailed spending data is not captured in state financial systems. To meet the bill's requirements, agencies would need to manually review invoices to identify and categorize costs, creating a significant administrative burden. DAS states this process would be time-consuming, resource-intensive, and not feasible within existing staffing or budgets. Even with potential help from third parties, agencies would still bear most of the workload, limiting the effectiveness of that support.

Daniel O'Keefe, Commissioner, Department of Economic and Community Development

DECD outlines its mission to strengthen Connecticut's economy through business growth, community development, and promotion of tourism and cultural assets. It raises concerns

about House Bill 5343, which would require agencies to report detailed annual advertising data to DAS for a statewide report. While supporting transparency in principle, DECD argues the bill would create a significant administrative burden, particularly for its marketing and tourism office. Collecting and organizing detailed data on spending, vendors, media types, and campaigns would be time-consuming and could divert resources from core functions like tourism promotion and marketing strategy. DECD also questions whether the added reporting would meaningfully improve accountability, even with potential outside assistance.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Representative Farrar, Representative Brown, and Representative Fortier, House Democratic Office, State of Connecticut

The decline of local news is undermining community civic health and democratic accountability. Newspapers are disappearing rapidly—over two per week nationwide—leading to lower voter participation, higher corruption, increased misinformation, and declining trust in media. Consolidation by hedge funds has shifted coverage away from local issues, reducing the number of local journalists and civic reporting. In Connecticut, local journalist density is low, and only a small share of articles focus on local civic matters. House Bill 5343 aims to address this by requiring state agencies to report advertising spending, including how much supports local media. This would improve transparency and help assess whether public funds are supporting struggling local news outlets, with low-cost reporting supported by external partners.

Pua Ford, Media Issues Specialist, League of Women Voters of Connecticut

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut supports the bill, emphasizing that strong democracy depends on well-informed citizens and accessible public-interest media. They argue the bill is necessary because the state currently cannot easily track how much it spends on advertising, making it difficult to evaluate or support local journalism without impacting the budget. While the requirement may seem minor, the League believes state agencies should be able to account for such spending, just as some already do. Collecting this data would improve transparency and enable future efforts to direct funding toward local news organizations. Ultimately, they see this as a foundational step to strengthen civic information and support good government.

David Fortier, Editor in Chief, The Bristol Edition

They hope HB 5343 leads to state advertising dollars being directed to local newspapers publishers so that they can continue to build strong communities, inform residents and foster democracy in spirit and practice. Information and news are integral to the success of American democracy, and news operations have been supported by the government since their inception, beginning with the Founders. There is that no small matter of “freedom of the press.” Local news is a most significant contributor to this “democratic infrastructure,” both the spirit of our constitutional predecessors here in the state as well as in those who promulgated our U.S. Constitution. Newspapers are rooted in specific places, with specific issues, among specific people grappling with those specific issues. This local relationship is rich in that it is a person-to-person endeavor. And herein lies a cost for fostering accountability of the best sort and engaging its citizens in civic discourse that democracy demands. If anything has been learned from social media, rather than fostering civic engagement it undermines it. People are forced into information silos where beliefs are

hardened rather than challenged and minds opened. Local newspapers, steeped in community, need to be acknowledged for the good work they do for all of us, and some day, ensuring a portion of state advertising dollars will not only help them function better but also to ensure that our citizenry is at its best.

Lori Henson, Policy Manager, Rebuild Local News

HB5343 would increase transparency in how Connecticut spends public funds on advertising, which is currently difficult to track. Much of this spending is controlled by marketing agencies and often goes to Big Tech or national outlets rather than local media. Evidence from other states shows limited support for community news under current systems. The bill would reveal where taxpayer dollars go, helping local news outlets compete for funding and strengthening struggling journalism in Connecticut, which has seen major job losses. Strong local news improves civic outcomes like voter participation and government accountability. Greater transparency would also help agencies make more informed decisions and potentially keep more advertising dollars within the state.

Bruce Putterman, Publisher and CEO, The Connecticut Mirror

The publisher of CT Mirror highlights a lack of transparency in Connecticut's state advertising spending. Despite reaching a highly relevant audience, CT Mirror rarely receives state advertising. Public records like Open Checkbook show little detail, with most spending categorized broadly as "marketing" through agencies, making it impossible to track where funds ultimately go. Even state officials cannot clearly account for this spending due to fragmented contracts across agencies. This lack of clarity limits accountability and prevents policymakers and local news outlets from assessing or accessing potential funding. The author argues the state should know—and disclose—where advertising dollars go, and that HB 5343 would address this transparency gap.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Anonymous 39

They oppose advertising for the state related to affordability issues. They asked why advertise if people are having affordability issues in the state.

Reported by: Cindy Panioto

Date: 3/24/26