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Chairman Longmuir and Committee members,

My name is Jill Friesz, owner of GS Publishing, LLC. I own and operate seven weekly newspapers in the southwest corner of the state, and I am advocating for all newspapers and readers from the state of North Dakota.

I am OPPOSED to House Bill 1380.

According to the 2024 official election results, the voters in my coverage area have spoken, and they want the council proceedings published in the newspaper.

**In the 17 cities I serve throughout the Southwest portion of the state,
88% voted YES to have proceedings published in the newspaper.**

The job of the newspapers in North Dakota is to be the watchdog of the communities we serve. We believe in transparency and accountability and take this position very seriously. Having access to and understanding local government proceedings helps residents stay informed about important issues such as budget allocations, infrastructure projects, and community programs. This knowledge is essential for residents to advocate for their needs and priorities effectively.

I am frequently tasked with reaching out to County and City Auditors and School Business Managers to remind them to submit proceedings for publication. If they are not required to publish in newspapers, where is the accountability? Websites can be cumbersome to maneuver, while others are not updated in a timely manner, if they exist at all. The communities in my coverage area have a large elderly population, many who do not have access to a computer or skills to navigate technology. Part of our role in the community is to be the local historian. By printing the commission proceedings, we are keeping a record of the actions taken in our local government to be preserved for future generations.

Once again, I urge you to recognize the significance of publishing proceedings in local newspapers and consider a DO NOT PASS on HB 1380. By doing so, we promote transparency, enhance accountability, encourage civic engagement, support local journalism, and foster a more informed community.

Sincerely,

Jill M. Friesz

Owner/Publisher GS Publishing, LLC

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