



February 29, 2024

Re: SF 3317 (Uniform Public Expression Act)

Dear Chair Latz and Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee:

I write as executive director of the Minnesota Newspaper Association (MNA), to express our views on SF 3317. MNA represents more than 260 newspapers throughout the state, from the smallest to the largest.

MNA, its members, and Minnesota's news organizations more generally, strongly support SF 3317 and urge the Committee to approve it. Defamation lawsuits are one of the most serious financial threats that news organizations face. Even when such a lawsuit is poorly grounded in fact and law—which many are—the legal fees required by the litigation can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Insurance to cover these costs has become hard to obtain, very expensive, and comes with high deductibles.

The polarization that has occurred in this country over the past several years has led to an increased risk of defamation lawsuits pursued mainly as a punitive measure, brought not only against news outlets, but against other organizations and citizens as well. In addition, the significant changes that have occurred in the news media caused by the development of the internet and social media has left newspapers and other traditional news organizations with considerably diminished financial resources, and thus more vulnerable to the impacts of a defamation lawsuit.

These developments make the protections that would be provided by SF 3317 especially important. We would therefore ask that the bill be approved and moved forward.

We appreciate your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Hills". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lisa Hills
Executive Director, Minnesota Newspaper Association

CC: Senator Bonnie Westlin