

September 15, 2021

Re: SB 98 Public peace: media access, McGuire — Support

Dear Governor Gavin Newsom,

Our organizations strongly support Senate Bill 98, which will protect journalists covering protests, demonstrations and civil unrest.

We are part of an unprecedented coalition of press associations and labor unions, which collectively represent thousands of California journalists.

During the past two years, working conditions for journalists have steadily deteriorated across the state. While covering protests, many of our newspaper, television, radio, digital, freelance and student media colleagues were arrested, detained or injured by law enforcement. We have documented more than 50 such incidents in California during the 12-month period from May 2020 through April 2021. These journalists were just trying to do their job.

SB 98, introduced by Sen. Mike McGuire, will extend existing state protections for journalists working in disaster areas and apply them to civil disturbances. This is a modest solution that ensures parity with long-established statutes and principles.

Earlier this year, our organizations joined a conversation already in progress in Sacramento about SB 98. Since then, we have shared our concerns and participated in the amendment process. We appreciate this opportunity and the resulting bill.

We also listened carefully to law enforcement concerns, and supported changes made to address several hypothetical situations.

Now, we ask you to clarify the law and rectify a problem that has repeatedly occurred in California and placed journalists in harm's way

Please turn SB 98 into law. Doing so will support the First Amendment and the vital activities of the press, while protecting the people's right to receive information regarding matters of public interest.

Sincerely,

Asian American Journalists Association, Los Angeles  
Asian American Journalists Association, San Diego  
Asian American Journalists Association, San Francisco Bay Area  
Californians Aware  
CCNMA: Latino Journalists of California  
IBEW Local 45

Journalism and Women Symposium, Southern California (JAWS SoCal)  
Los Angeles Press Club  
Media Alliance  
Media Guild of the West, NewsGuild-CWA Local 39213  
National Association of Black Journalists of Los Angeles  
National Association of Hispanic Journalists  
National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association - L.A. Chapter  
National Press Photographers Association  
National Writers Union  
Online News Association Local Los Angeles  
Orange County Press Club  
Pacific Media Workers Guild, The NewsGuild-CWA Local 39521  
Radio Television Digital News Association  
Society of Professional Journalists, Greater Los Angeles Chapter  
Society of Professional Journalists, Northern California Chapter  
Society of Professional Journalists, San Diego Chapter  
We make KCRW  
Writers Guild of America, East

[Signed version to Gov. Newsom via email]