



DEPARTMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

February 9, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-222
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Capitol Building, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez
Chairwoman, U.S. House Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Benjamin Cardin
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business
and Entrepreneurship
428A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Chairwoman Velazquez, and Chairman Cardin,

On behalf of the 24 national unions in the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE), I write in support of expanding Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) eligibility to digital-native news organizations that do not already qualify for PPP loans. Included in DPE is the Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE), whose members include journalists and other media professionals working for a number of digital-native news organizations. Expanding PPP access to digital-native news organizations will help ensure these professionals can stay on the job at a time when access to reliable news and information is essential.

As background, in the December 2020 COVID-19 relief and omnibus funding bill, Congress provided PPP eligibility to newspapers, broadcast television, and radio stations. Digital-native news organizations were not covered by this legislation because they are classified under a different NAICS code than newspapers, broadcast TV stations, and radio stations. Digital-native sites also generally do not otherwise qualify for PPP loans because most companies have more than 500 employees. As a result, excluded from the Payroll Protection Program are the more than 16,000 journalists and news professionals, including thousands of union professionals, who work for digital-native outlets doing similar local, regional, and national reporting as their counterparts at newspapers and television and radio stations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has decimated the news industry's advertising revenues across all formats, print, television, radio, and digital-native. Absent immediate access to payroll support to weather the pandemic's impact, journalists and other media professionals working for digital-native news organizations will continue suffering layoffs and furloughs, and in an era when people turn first to their phones, tablets, and computers for news, the public will lose access to reliable information about their local communities. It is for this reason that I ask that you expand PPP eligibility to digital-native news organizations that do not already qualify for the program.

If you have any questions, please contact DPE Assistant to the President/Legislative Director, Michael Wasser, at mwasser@dpeaflcio.org or (202) 638-0320 x. 11.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Dorning'.

Jennifer Dorning, President