

Governor Wes Moore
c/o Ammar Moussa, Senior Press Secretary and Director of Media Strategy
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Dear Governor Moore:

We are a coalition of press freedom and civil liberties organizations and advocates.

We are alarmed by [reports](#) that you have instructed some Maryland agencies to send media requests from four news outlets for legal review, rather than responding to them, purportedly because of an ongoing defamation lawsuit against you by Sinclair's executive chairman.

The Baltimore Sun [reported](#) that the agencies have responded to its questions, as well as those of FOX45 News, 7News in Washington, D.C., and Spotlight on Maryland, with the following form response: "Because of the current lawsuit from Sinclair's Executive Chairman, David D. Smith, against the Governor, we're sending all media requests from Sinclair-affiliated outlets to our legal team for review. We'll get back to you once that's finished." Sinclair is the parent company of Spotlight on Maryland, FOX45 News and 7News, and Smith is a principal owner of the Sun.

We take no position on the merits of the lawsuit against you. But even if releasing information to journalists could undermine your litigation strategy, personal litigation does not justify impeding reporting or reducing government transparency. In any case, many of the inquiries you have [reportedly](#) sent for legal review relate to important social and political issues having absolutely nothing to do with the lawsuit.

This blanket refusal to answer inquiries from these news outlets is indicative of retaliatory motives on your part. Whatever [concerns](#) you have about Sinclair outlets' coverage of you and Smith's potential involvement in that coverage can be addressed by using your enormous platform to refute untrue or unfair reporting.

It is particularly jarring that, while government agencies under your watch stonewall reporters based on flimsy pretexts, you take to [the airwaves](#) to condemn the Trump administration's unconstitutional ban of news outlets the president doesn't like from the White House. Yes, Trump frequently turns his personal grudges into censorial government policy, to the detriment of the public. But your own conduct appears not much different.

We urge you to instruct all Maryland agencies that Smith's lawsuit against you is a personal matter and not an excuse to send media requests into a legal review black hole, and to cease any other unlawful retaliation against news outlets you personally dislike.

Sincerely,

Freedom of the Press Foundation
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Defending Rights & Dissent
PEN America
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Society of Environmental Journalists
Society of Professional Journalists