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Before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations

May 6, 2022

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of America's public media service—public television and public radio—on-air, online and in local communities throughout our country. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests \$565 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, \$60 million in FY 2023 for the maintenance and replacement of the public broadcasting interconnection system and other technologies and services, and \$30.5 million for the Department of Education's Ready To Learn program.

The investment in our nation's public media system delivers a substantial return on investment. Local stations and independent producers raise additional funding from contributions from nonprofits, foundations, corporations, and viewers and listeners across the country. On average, public media stations raise six non-federal dollars for every federal dollar received.

As the steward of the federal appropriation for public media, CPB is the only entity with the ability to serve and assess the entire public media ecosystem: public radio and television stations, producers, and distributors. CPB fulfills this leadership role—with a focus on innovation, efficiency, and service to the American people—by supporting new and diverse content creators, professional training and development, shared technologies and services, and strategic collaborations that increase local stations' capacity to serve their communities. The

federal appropriation ensures that public media remains a trusted and relevant resource shared by all Americans.

Public media has realized President Johnson's hopes when he signed the Public Broadcasting Act more than 50 years ago, becoming "a great network for knowledge-not just a broadcast system." Public media organizations play an essential role in our nation's civil society, from providing fact-based journalism, to creating resources that foster limitless learning, to shining a light on the diverse American experience. Public media supports an America motivated by excellence, civility, understanding, and opportunity.

In a world of information chaos, public media remains a trusted source of fact-based information. CPB builds upon that foundation by investing in local journalism collaborations, editorial integrity, and leadership training, as well as national and international reporting from 17 international bureaus and Ukraine, and by supporting shared technologies that expand public media's reach and impact. Further, CPB investments in community engagement journalism, such as the American Amplified initiative, enable public media stations to invite community members into the news production process. Through this community engagement model, public media organizations strengthen the trust in their journalism and ensure its coverage is meaningful in peoples' daily lives.

Millions of American families rely on public media for educational television, community-based learning, and safe, online experiences. Through longstanding support from Congress and a partnership with the Department of Education's Ready to Learn program, public media has built an extensive library of effective educational assets focused on the skills that help prepare kids for school. These resources, also available online for anytime learning, complement

the work of teachers and childcare providers and offer additional educational supports at home, building learning communities dedicated to children's developmental needs.

Beyond public media's recognized role in early learning, CPB invests in new and innovative resources that promote opportunities and inspire lifelong learning for tweens, teens, and young adults. Guided by CPB-funded research at the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, local public media stations are exploring new models for engaging young people in their communities. This work will help foster meaningful connections to tweens and teens and create new, safe places for them to build confidence and share their voices.

As young people transition to adulthood and face significant decisions, public media provides the information and inspiration needed to pursue their dreams. CPB's American Graduate initiative allows job seekers to explore careers through digital profiles produced by local public media stations. To help prepare job seekers for employment, the *Workplace Essential Skills* online instructional system uses videos, interactive learning tools, and quizzes aimed at specific business sectors and career fields. From searching for careers to preparing for the interview, Americans can utilize public media as a trusted resource to help them navigate the opportunities available to them.

In an increasingly diverse country, storytelling can help strengthen our civil society. CPB-supported documentaries and public affairs content provide an understanding of our history and reveal the complexity of our modern world. Public media content can create the space to explore ideas, open conversations and facilitate a healthy, civil dialogue, which is essential to our democracy. Further, public media content creates lasting impressions extending beyond the broadcast or digital experience. StoryCorps' *One Small Step* initiative, supported by CPB, is bringing people with different viewpoints together in the hopes of creating lasting, mutual

respect and understanding. Americans can hear these conversations, which are based on individual human experiences, through StoryCorps' podcasts and on public radio stations across the country.

CPB funding ensures that the diverse American experience is incorporated into public media's content and services. CPB supports organizations, such as the National Multicultural Alliance, Firelight Media, and the Independent Television Service, to help connect diverse stories and perspectives to national audiences. These organizations host open calls each year to attract new talent into the public media system and facilitate connections between these producers and national distributors. For example, Leola Calzolari-Stewart and her recent film *The American Diplomat* received financial support from Black Public Media and Firelight Media, ensuring that the project could be completed and make its national premiere through PBS' American Experience in February 2022.

Local public radio and television stations add original programming that elevates the music, culture, and arts of communities in a way that honors its creators and the people that inspire them. Available for free and commercial-free, this locally created content is unique to public media.

Interconnection Infrastructure: The public broadcasting interconnection system remains the technical backbone of the public media system, ensuring the uninterrupted distribution of content to and from national organizations and local stations. It also serves as part of the nation's emergency alert and warning network. This request, if fully funded, would signify a landmark investment in the public media system. A \$60 million appropriation beginning in FY 2023 would ensure that every public television and radio station, no matter its size or location,

could provide its community a public media experience on par with the technology used by commercial media.

The \$60 million appropriation would support continued investments in the public television and radio interconnection systems and new shared technologies and services including: cybersecurity; data analytics and business intelligence; and a content delivery network (CDN). Further, it would enable CPB to support shared infrastructure to gain efficiencies and resilience, realize significantly reduced costs for network services, and minimize risk as legacy practices by stations are discontinued. Without a substantial, sustained increase in CPB's interconnection and infrastructure account, the public media system will continue to fall further behind commercial media consumer experiences. It also would devalue the federal investment through CPB's base appropriation and ultimately put public media's unique public-private partnership at risk.

Ms. Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, CPB's FY 2023/2025 requests are necessary to maintain our nation's public media service. This funding provides essential support to stations, facilitates technological advancement, and supports increased investments in children's content, local, national, and international journalism, public safety, and professional development. It also enables CPB to make first-time investments in areas such as cybersecurity, which are critical in today's world.

Thank you for allowing me, on behalf of America's public media system, to submit this testimony. I appreciate your consideration of CPB's funding request.