

**Statement of Patricia de Stacy Harrison
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Before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations
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Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, 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 communities throughout our country. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests \$575 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, \$60 million in FY 2024 for the maintenance and replacement of the public broadcasting interconnection system and other technologies and services, and \$31 million in FY 2024 for the Department of Education's Ready To Learn (RTL) program.

At a time of disruption and decreasing trust in our nation's institutions, CPB is supporting public media content and services that strengthen the bonds of our civil society. We are proud to be a partner in a new initiative called "More Perfect," which is an alliance of 12 Presidential centers and more than 100 organizations across the country, to strengthen and renew American democracy as we approach 2026, the 250th anniversary of the nation's birth. Public media, through free, educational content and services, is addressing the civics gap helping Americans of all ages understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

CPB is proud to steward the federal appropriation for public media in ways that strengthen local communities. By statute, over 70 percent of funds appropriated to CPB go directly to local public television and radio stations. Although stations receive funding from other sources, their annual CPB grants serve as an economic foundation for providing crucial educational, informational, and public safety services to the communities they serve. These local

benefits of public broadcasting are especially important in rural and underserved areas where there are fewer alternative media options.

In addition to providing financial support to our nation's more than 1,500 local public television and radio stations, CPB is focused on making strategic investments to 1) create research-based, educational content in core academic areas like reading, math, history, and science, as well as building critical thinking skills; 2) decrease the number of news deserts and increase local reporting; 3) create multimedia content that reflects the diversity of the American people and is available in all the ways they choose to access our content; 4) build greater system capacity by supporting shared technology and services that benefit every station, regardless of size or location, and frees up local resources so stations can then reinvest in their community; and 5) strengthen our nation's public alert and warning system so that Americans have life-saving and critical information in times of emergency.

CPB supports content and resources for learners of all ages and the educators who teach them. For pre-school children, *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* focuses on life skills, and *Elinor Wonders Why* focuses on science curiosity and problem solving. For early elementary school children, *City Island* explores a living city where objects in the city are animated characters who teach civics lessons by showing how communities work together to solve problems. For middle and high school students, CPB supported a new PBS LearningMedia U.S. History Collection to help teachers and students increase their knowledge of U.S. history and further civic learning. The Collection uses content from American Experience and FRONTLINE as well as content produced by local stations to engage and educate students. In 2020, CPB launched a project called By/With/For Youth: Inspiring Next Generation Public Media Audiences to identify new ways in which public media can meet tweens' and teens' educational, civic, and career-readiness

needs on the platforms they use every day. Last year, CPB provided funding to 12 stations to produce content “by, with and for” youth. KBTC-TV in Tacoma, WA, created “Ability Awareness,” a series of short YouTube videos produced with autistic youth and youth with disabilities that addresses life skills needed for transitioning to the workplace and independent living. More than 40 grant applications were received from stations.

CPB’s “American Graduate: Jobs Explained” is launching this year, building off of more than a decade of work in supporting community-based solutions to help young people succeed in school and in the workplace. CPB is supporting ten stations across the country to create more than 3,000 short videos about in-demand careers in industries such as manufacturing, health care, green jobs, trades, information technology, and hospitality—some of the fastest-growing and most needed jobs in today’s economy. The videos will link to a website providing related career development resources and industry-specific information. With a \$575 million appropriation, CPB could fund additional local station work under these educational priorities.

Through the U.S. Department of Education’s Ready To Learn (RTL) program, CPB and PBS partner to research, develop, and test innovative new ways to use educational media and resources to advance critical early learning skills for children ages 2-8, especially children in low-income communities. The evidence-based content is distributed by stations across the country. Last month, the new RTL series *Work it Out Wombats!* premiered on PBS KIDS to teach important computer science inquiry skills. In the first two weeks, the series exceeded streaming metrics for recent PBS KIDS launches with more than 23 million streams and 1.7 million views YouTube. Ready To Learn funding also supports stations to extend these learning resources to local partners working with young children, including Preschool Development Grant Programs, Head Start, Title I schools, libraries, and other community partners.

With the increasing influence of misinformation and disinformation in civil discourse, CPB is addressing urgent civic information needs by supporting local, state, regional, national, and international journalism. Today, public media represents the largest, non-profit news system in the U.S, with roughly 4,150 local journalists. Over the past 15 years, CPB has helped sustain this ecosystem by investing a total of more than \$150 million in discretionary funds to journalism, in addition to the money directly allocated annually through Community Service Grants. These discretionary funds have gone to support public media's signature national newsrooms – FRONTLINE, PBS NewsHour, Washington Week, NPR, PRX The World – as well as local and regional journalism. Since 2009, CPB has launched 41 local and regional news collaborations like the Ohio Valley ReSource, six public media stations in Kentucky and Ohio, along with the non-profit news organization Mountain State Spotlight in West Virginia, that provides in-depth coverage of the Ohio Valley region. This year, CPB is investing more than \$2 million in station efforts to provide more robust state government coverage and boost public knowledge of how government works at the state and local levels. CPB's support for journalism also includes funding for programming that helps Americans understand the world and their place in it. In 2022, CPB provided \$2.48 million to NPR, FRONTLINE, PBS NewsHour, and PRX's *The World*, to support in-depth, fact-based reporting in Ukraine and other high-risk areas.

CPB funding ensures that public media's content reflects the diversity of our country in race, gender, socio-economic status, geography, ability/disability, and points of view. 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, as well as programs such as StoryCorps' Military Voices Initiative, *1A Remaking America*, and Twin Cities Public Television's *Facing Suicide*. CPB is also supporting new music

formats called Urban Alternative, which mixes music and information to meet the interests of Millennials and Generation X, and is elevating voices from rural communities through its *Coming Home: Connecting to Community* initiative.

For more than 30 years, Congress has provided CPB a separate appropriation to maintain and modernize public media interconnection, which is the technological backbone of the public media system and serves as an essential part of our nation's emergency alerting infrastructure. 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 an enterprise content management system. 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. By providing the digital services and technologies at scale, stations can reduce or eliminate funding currently allocated for these projects, which will enable them to focus on providing educational, informational, and public safety services to their communities rather than individually procuring technologies. Moreover, small stations and rural stations greatly benefit from larger investments in shared infrastructure as they do not have the resources to assess and acquire these technologies.

CPB's FY 2024/2026 requests are necessary to maintain our nation's public media service. With your support, CPB will continue to serve as a trusted steward of the federal appropriation and invest these taxpayer dollars in ways that support the educational and informational needs of Americans in their daily lives and prepare them for our shared future. Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro and members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. I appreciate your consideration of CPB's request.