

**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 serving your communities and our country. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests funding of \$595 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2027, \$60 million in FY 2025 for the replacement of the public broadcasting interconnection system and other technologies and services, and \$31 million for the Department of Education's Ready To Learn program.

Public media, funded and supported by Americans across the country through CPB, provides every American with access to lifelong learning, for free and commercial free. From educational and research-driven early childhood content to programs that inform such as *NOVA's* "Great American Eclipse," to those that inspire such as the *National Memorial Day Concert* and *A Capitol Fourth* celebration, public media provides a vast content library on varied subjects and perspectives.

At a time when our young people are connected to and influenced by social media, public media provides trusted, age-appropriate, educational, informational, and civic learning content that prepares them for life and to engage as citizens contributing to our civil society. An example of this is CPB's American Graduate Jobs: Explained initiative, which connects young people to in-demand jobs and potential careers. Local stations throughout the country are working with young people in their communities to create social media videos in which practical information is shared about how to get a job in some of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy.

Public media, through its community connections and its trusted reputation, is mobilizing conversations about mental health for adults and teens alike. National public media distributor American Public Media's "Call to Mind" initiative has provided broadcast specials, online articles, social media campaigns, and podcasts covering many the many aspects and perspectives of mental health topics. Local stations partner with local health experts, community nonprofits and schools to connect with their community and help direct audiences to local resources and support. For example, West Virginia Public Broadcasting recently collaborated with the West Virginia Drug Intervention Institute on "Hope and Healing: A Discussion with West Virginia Youth." The issue forum documentary gathered youth from West Virginia to talk about issues they face on topics including substance use disorder, bullying, social media, and mental health. These resources are crucial for helping young adults gain a deeper understanding of mental health, recognize when they or their friends need help, and know where to find support.

Educational content is, and continues to be, one of public media's most significant contributions to the public interest. Beyond the classroom, educational programming, supported by funding from Congress to CPB and the Department of Education's Ready To Learn program,

offers accessible and research-driven content and resources that empower parents to create environments of family-centered learning to play a role their child's education. Local public media stations collaborate with trusted community partners to deliver these resources to those who need them most, further ensuring the federal investment makes the greatest educational impact. Public media content not only supports academic achievement but also prepares individuals with the essential skills to be lifelong learners. CPB-funded programs such as *Rosie's Rules*, *City Island*, *Sesame Street's* "Together We Can" music series, the *Civics 101* podcast, and many more resources in PBS LearningMedia's U.S. History and Civics Collections teach the foundations of government, the basic principles of democracy, and give children an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of a citizen in our civil society.

The late educator and producer, and minister Fred Rogers famously asked his young audience, "Won't you be my neighbor?" His legacy through public media moves us to connect with one another with respect for our differences. Since CPB began supporting StoryCorps' "One Small Step" initiative in 2018, it has convened 2,690 conversations across the country, fostering mutual understanding and respect. One Small Step pairs strangers with different political views for one-on-one conversations, not to debate politics, but to learn about each other's lives. These conversations help to humanize those on opposing sides of political or social divides. They remind the American public of our common concerns and values.

As we approach our nation's Semiquincentennial, CPB's new civic content and engagement initiative will uplift the stories of volunteerism, public service, and community engagement from everyday Americans who have helped sustain our country as we celebrate our 250th anniversary. Through these initiatives and more, public media highlights good citizen values, the qualities of civic responsibility, respect, and compassion that contribute to the betterment of our neighborhoods and nation.

In an era of media skepticism, public media serves as a trusted conduit to the local, national, and global information people need to stay healthy, safe, and informed. CPB supports public media's commitment to the highest editorial standards by funding projects such as: editorial training for newsroom leaders; the Public Media Journalists Association Editor Corps, which provides immediate editing help to public media stations that need it most; and the Code of Editorial Integrity for Local Public Media Organizations, which defines the rigorous standards to be applied to public media journalism. The result of this work leads to some of the most trusted, accessible, and transparent content available to the American public. Public media continues to set a high standard in journalism, consistently recognized for its in-depth reporting and information. The recently released nominations for George Foster Peabody Awards once again has public media leading with 14 nominations, including in the "Best Documentary" category for the Academy Award-winning "20 Days in Mariupol" by *FRONTLINE*.

Per the Public Broadcasting Act, more than 70 percent of funds appropriated to CPB go directly to locally operated and independent public television and radio stations. These nearly 1,500 stations are embedded in and responsive to their rural, small town, and urban communities. They play a pivotal role in fostering an environment of constructive public discourse. Through issue forums, candidate debates, and town hall meetings, stations convene the community around issues affecting everyday lives. Additionally, in times of crisis or emergency, public media

serves as an essential platform, offering emergency alerts and timely, trusted information that supports public safety preparedness, and resiliency. For example, following the catastrophic fires of August 2023, in Maui, Hawai'i Public Radio produced numerous live programs that featured local voices engaging in civil dialogue about the fire response and recovery, and PBS Hawai'i hosted a 90-minute discussion with more than a dozen emergency management experts with a focus on natural disaster preparedness. Such programming not only informs but also invites viewers and listeners to engage with their communities and the broader world.

Public media's model for community collaboration extends beyond the screen and airwaves, with many public media initiatives leading to on-the-ground partnerships. Because these stations provide information and educational services of value, private donations contribute the majority of the funding needed to sustain their service. However, private funding alone is not enough. The federal investment through CPB is essential to sustain the public service mission of local public broadcasting stations, especially in rural areas.

Public media provides a national stage for cultural enrichment, offering a wide range of arts and cultural programming, public broadcasting ensures that all Americans have access to the arts, regardless of their geographical location or economic status. Programs such as *Great Performances* and *American Masters* bring the most renowned and admired artists in our history to screens across the country. CPB funding to independent producers helps uncover the unique stories and perspectives that make up the American experience. Further, local programming such as the *Reel South* documentary series, Minnesota Public Radio's Rural Voice town hall series, public radio music stations' coverage of their local theaters and symphonies, and West Virginia Public Broadcasting's *Mountain Stage* preserves and celebrates the underrepresented music, arts, and culture of local communities. Public media brings local, rural, and regional stories to a national audience, ensuring community voices are included in the national conversation.

Increased federal investment in CPB is essential for public media's service to remain relevant and to provide resources that matter to the public. As we navigate rapid technological advancements and shifting media consumption habits, CPB utilizes its stewardship and leadership role to support stations and producers through this environment of constant change. The \$60 million appropriation for public media's interconnection system is essential to maintain and expand the reach of public media on multiple platforms, as well as to support the distribution of content that serves the nation's information and public safety needs. With additional resources, public media can invest in innovative technologies to meet the demands of the digital age, create efficiencies by utilizing shared services, and continue to provide high-quality, accessible content to all Americans.

Investing in public media, through CPB, is not merely a funding decision; it is a commitment to the health and success of our democracy, the education of our people, and the commemoration of our nation's rich culture and history. The contributions of CPB-funded public media are invaluable, fostering an educated, informed, and inspired citizenry willing to advance our nation's ideals. As we face the challenges of the 21st century, the role of public media in strengthening our civil society has never been more important. With your support, CPB will effectively and efficiently steward the federal appropriation to ensure that public media continues to serve as a vital resource for all Americans.

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.