

**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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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 communities throughout our country. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests \$565 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, \$20 million in FY 2022 for the maintenance and replacement of the public broadcasting interconnection system and other technologies and services, and \$30 million for the Department of Education’s Ready To Learn program.

CPB stewards the federal appropriation for public media in ways that create the greatest impact in content and services for the American taxpayer. The appropriation to CPB puts the “public” in “public media” and ensures that the service is available to all Americans. While stations fundraise from private and nonfederal sources, federal funding remains critical to local stations, especially in these challenging times. CPB’s grants to stations reduce the impact of downturns in the economy and help stations ensure the continuity of essential services to their local communities. Without federal funding, crucial educational, informational, and public safety services would be significantly diminished, especially in rural and underserved areas.

CPB grants are the foundation upon which local public media stations help build resilient communities, inspire local partners and neighbors to address shared challenges, educate students of all ages, and help Americans participate in and strengthen our democracy. CPB’s strategic investments, focused on advancing innovation, diversity, and dialogue, prepare stations to

respond to the needs of their communities with content and services that strengthen our civil society.

As America's largest classroom, public media stations have long provided virtual learning opportunities through educational programming — accessible regardless of income or geography. Through the Department of Education's Ready To Learn program, public media creates accessible, research-driven content and experiences to help prepare young learners for school and engage families in their child's learning.

Over the past year, local stations have used Congress' investments in public media to create locally-driven solutions to the educational challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. Public television stations leveraged partnerships with local and state education agencies and utilized public media's library of critically acclaimed educational content to help teachers and families turn homes into classrooms. National organizations and local stations are continuing to find new and innovative ways to address inequities exacerbated by the pandemic and meet the dynamic needs of students, regardless of age.

Beyond the classroom, public media is partnering locally to help create workforce ecosystems that support job seekers along their varied paths. Through CPB's American Graduate initiative, local stations are helping students attain their high school diploma and continue that success by helping them navigate the rapidly changing nature of work and careers. Specifically, stations are bringing together job seekers, companies, and training and education centers to create individualized solutions to modern workforce challenges. Responding to the pandemic, CPB is adapting American Graduate to help engage young adults and those sidelined by the pandemic to explore and prepare for high-demand careers in a post-COVID-19 economy. Creating content about the state of the workforce and highlighting career pathways will allow job

seekers to learn about opportunities that they had not previously been exposed to and plan for futures they may not have imagined. Further, CPB investments in digital content, such as *Career Hacks*, gives viewers the tools they need to navigate job opportunities and the workplace.

Public media continues to document our world as it is and preserve the ever-expanding American story. Through longstanding support to public media organizations such as the National Multicultural Alliance (NMCA), ITVS, Firelight Media, and for initiatives including the Urban Alternative format and Undercurrents, CPB funding brings forward underrepresented voices, fosters authentic storytelling, and ensures that public media content captures the full breadth of diversity in our country. When making grants, CPB values diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, geography and points of views. Our goal is to fund diverse filmmakers, storytellers, producers and directors who connect in authentic ways to all audiences.

Public media is helping build inclusive communities – locally, nationally, and online – centered on our shared humanity and experience. From Latino Public Broadcasting’s digital series honoring frontline workers for their work during the pandemic and beyond; to StoryCorps’ *One Small Step* initiative that brings together people of opposing viewpoints and invites us to conversations built on respect and humanity; to the *Move to Include* initiative designed to promote inclusion for people with disabilities through original content and community events; and through CPB’s *Coming Home: Connecting to Community* rural initiative, public media is helping create communities of belonging.

Because public media stations are locally operated, their community partnerships allow them to deepen the impact of CPB’s investments in nationally acclaimed content and open paths to meaningful conversations. For example, CPB’s support of *The Black Church: This Is Our Story*, *This Is Our Song* supported stations’ efforts to create content that spoke to the pride in,

and impact of, local Black churches. Coming this fall, GBH will bring *American Veteran* to national audiences. The series, through local station engagement efforts, will connect our nation's civilians and veterans in a conversation about the veteran experience and what it means to serve our country, from the beginning of the republic to the present.

Every day, major stories are developing in communities across the country. Public media stations are a responsible and trusted part of our information infrastructure – delivering fact-based news on issues of consequence and helping viewers and listeners better understand our rapidly changing world. Amid shrinking newsrooms and expanding news deserts, public media stations, especially public radio stations, are the last providers of up-to-the-minute news and local reporters covering the community. Annual funding to local stations is enhanced by CPB's direct investments in journalism collaborations, professional development, editorial integrity, and station capacity. CPB's investments proved to be invaluable over the past year as public media journalists acted as frontline news providers, uncovering the specific ways COVID-19 affected individual communities.

National and local public media organizations have earned their audience's trust for more than half a century. In partnership with the COVID Collaborative, CPB has provided support to local stations so that they may deliver life-saving information about the pandemic and vaccines to communities that have been disproportionately impacted. Specifically, CPB provided grants to public radio stations serving Native American and Black communities to create COVID-19 public outreach campaigns, including the broadcast of public safety announcements in diverse languages and local dialects. Further, public media's infrastructure has helped transmit more than 500 COVID-19 wireless emergency alerts issued by state and local authorities in different parts of the country.

Interconnection Infrastructure: The public broadcasting interconnection system maintains a vibrant local/regional/national system through which breaking news reaches interested listeners and public media producers find audiences. Without the interconnection system, there is no national public media service. CPB appreciates the steady support of Congress for the interconnection system and the support of essential services that help deliver public media content in ways that fit with media consumption habits of today and the future. This critical funding will help public media remain accessible to the American people.

CPB's FY 2024 request of \$565 million and FY 2022 requests of \$20 million and \$30 million for interconnection and Ready To Learn, respectively, is necessary to maintain our nation's public media system. This funding provides essential support to stations – particularly those serving rural, minority and other underserved communities – and enables innovation and technological advances.

Public media's mission remains as vital as ever. 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. Ms. Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, 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.