

**Statement of Patricia de Stacy Harrison  
President and CEO, Corporation for Public Broadcasting  
Before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations  
March 20, 2020**

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 serving communities throughout our country. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests funding of \$515 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, \$20 million in FY 2021 for the 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.

The Corporation provides leadership and stewards the federal appropriation to ensure a healthy and sustainable public media system. With CPB funding to 1,500 local public television and radio stations across the country, the federal appropriation guarantees that important educational content and services, news and public affairs programming, and cultural treasures reach Americans living in rural, small town and urban communities. Stations leverage the appropriation, raising, on average, six times more from non-federal funding sources than they receive from CPB. While private funding and donations can and do make up a significant portion of the finances of the public media system, the federal appropriation remains an essential part of the public-private partnership for public media. This seed money pays invaluable dividends to millions of Americans and their families, especially the unserved and underserved. Only through Congressional funding can public media maintain this universal access.

In order to meet the educational needs of young people, public media provides award winning high-quality educational content on all platforms. Through the Department of

Education's Ready to Learn grant, public television is preparing our youngest learners for school, especially those in underserved communities, by delivering proven educational resources and experiences to parents, teachers and caregivers. While today's media environment offers abundant content aimed at children, no other outlet provides safe, trusted, educational content that is free of charge and commercial-free. The federal appropriation to CPB ensures that our children will continue to have access to public media's content over the air, online, through mobile apps and in their community.

Federal support through CPB helps local public media stations provide new services that excite and engage students, teachers and parents. For example, the Mobile Virtual Reality Lab (MVRL) at Georgia Public Broadcasting utilizes virtual reality headsets to immerse students in educational experiences. Through the MVRL, students are transported to key moments in the Civil Rights Movement and can also explore prehistoric cultures of Native American tribes.

Further to ensure that young people can access content of value to their lives, CPB is helping launch TRAX, a new public media network of original podcasts for ages 9 to 13 years old. Beginning this year, TRAX will offer on-demand audio content that is educational and entertaining, and diverse in genre, format and voice. In addition, CPB is funding research at the Joan Ganz Cooney Center to explore new ways public media can connect trusted, educational content to children ages 8 to 18. As learning becomes more personalized, Congress' support is needed to continue to research, develop and test how educational media and technology can improve students' learning outcomes.

Through public media initiatives such as American Graduate, stations provide high-quality educational content and community engagement that helps Americans prepare for success in school and career. Nine years ago, public media addressed the high school dropout

crisis—one million students failing to graduate each year. Through national and local content, award-winning documentaries, reporting and town halls, the American Graduate initiative drove dialogue and put a face on a statistic. As a result of the steadfast commitment of initiatives such as American Graduate, the national graduation rate has risen to an unprecedented 84.6 percent. Further, research shows that in 88 percent of those communities where American Graduate was active, schools experienced an almost ten percent increase in their graduation rates—compared with the national average of 5.5 percent. Moreover, recent government statistics showed that for the first time, black students' graduation rates are on par with white youth. While we are proud of this success, there is still work to be done.

Building on American Graduate's success, CPB expanded the initiative to focus on connecting young people to essential workforce skills and career opportunities. For example, Connecticut Public Broadcasting facilitated a town hall where businesses shared what success looks like for those who enter high-demand, skilled careers and broke down multiple negative perceptions with data and storytelling. With CPB support, Kentucky Educational Television (KET) created Workplace Essential Skills – an online instructional system utilizing videos, interactive learning tools and quizzes to guide learners through the job application process and workplace environment. KET has launched online certification courses in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation/logistics, and in construction and information technology. American Graduate is helping Americans improve their everyday lives and rise to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

CPB seeks to increase the capacity of public radio and television stations to create high-quality original and enterprise journalism by supporting collaborations between public media stations. As local journalism diminishes, public media stations have added more than 700

journalists to their staffs during the past six years. Local reporting and community-led conversations on issues such as aging and mental health provide resources and answers for those affected. With the global outbreak of COVID-19 and the need for community information, South Florida PBS is providing public television stations across the country with health reports from medical experts, and is making available a dedicated website that tracks the virus' spread and offers information about treatment and prevention. KUOW-FM in Seattle is providing live updates about the coronavirus online and on air and is explaining who is most at risk for severe illness, as well as where COVID-19 tests are available and its impact on businesses.

Further, CPB's investments in editorial integrity and regional journalism collaborations allow public media to retain the trust of the American people and deliver relevant news and information to local communities and regions. Nationally, programs such as FRONTLINE, PBS NewsHour, NOVA and All Things Considered examine critical issues facing our society, providing trusted content to Americans striving to learn more about our ever-changing world.

CPB supports initiatives that increase understanding of our shared American experience by capturing and elevating the stories of everyday people from differing backgrounds and viewpoints. CPB's Coming Home: Connecting to Community celebrates the people, culture, and stories of rural America through authentic local voices and talent. Working with local partners, public media can uniquely preserve community stories about traditions, aspirations, struggles and what it means to be an American. CPB is also proud to support StoryCorps, including its Military Voices Initiative, which records the stories of military service members and their families to honor and better understand their sacrifice.

Committed to building a pipeline of diverse talent, CPB funds the National Multicultural Alliance, Firelight Media's Documentary Lab, the Jacquie Jones Memorial Scholarship, the

Werk It Podcast Festival, and WXXI-Rochester's Move to Include initiative. Each of these efforts increases the numbers of diverse storytellers, ensuring our nation's public media service reflects the faces and voices of Americans.

**Interconnection Infrastructure:** Interconnection is the backbone of the public media system, delivering content every day from public media producers to public television and radio stations in communities throughout the country. Without it, there is no nationwide public media service. Recognizing its importance, Congress has funded public media's interconnection system since FY 1991 through a separate, periodic appropriation for interconnection. Currently, CPB is investing in new technologies and organizational change to ensure that the public media system continues to provide essential services in the 21st-century. For public media consumers, this will mean increased accessibility and personalization across all public media digital platforms and increased efficiencies for public media stations through unified radio and television content management systems. These efficiencies and technological improvements will advance the entire system and benefit the American people.

CPB's FY 2023 request of \$515 million and FY 2021 requests of \$20 million and \$30 million for interconnection and Ready To Learn, respectively, provides essential support to stations – particularly those serving rural, minority and other underserved communities – and enables innovation and technological advances. We know that Americans value their local public media stations. With your support, CPB will continue to serve as a trusted steward of the federal appropriation and invest these taxpayer dollars in ways that connect to Americans' daily lives and our shared future. Ms. Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me, on behalf of America's public media, to submit this testimony. I appreciate your consideration of our funding request.

**Statement of Patricia de Stacy Harrison**  
**President and CEO, Corporation for Public Broadcasting**  
**Before the Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Senate Committee on Appropriations**  
**March 20, 2020**

Chairwoman Capito, Ranking Member Tester and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of America's public media service — 1,500 public television and radio stations reaching nearly 99 percent of the American people living in rural, small town and urban communities across the country.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests \$20 million in FY 2021 for a new grant program, the Next Generation Resilient Warning System (NGRWS), within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's FEMA Federal Assistance account. Specifically, NGRWS would allow for public broadcasting entities, as defined in 47 USC 397(11), to procure, construct and improve transmission and other public safety related equipment, software and services, including NextGen TV, datacasting and MetaPub. This new competitive grant program would utilize public broadcasting's infrastructure to enable the expansion of alert, warning and interoperable communications and the incorporation of emerging technology in those activities, resulting in enhanced public safety capabilities that serve all Americans.

Public media is committed to and known for delivering essential and trusted content to all Americans who rely on this information to help understand and respond effectively to natural and manmade crisis. Most recently, stations are delivering vital information and services to their local communities to address the COVID-19 global pandemic, such as news and information through local journalism; educational resources for parents, teachers and schools that are closed; online tools and websites tracking the virus; podcasts with local medical professionals; and health-focused, public media journalism collaborations.

In addition to vital content, local stations provide life-saving emergency alert and communications services to their communities and to the first responders and public safety officials that protect them. These often unnoticed but critical services deliver warnings in times of emergency, direct people to safety, and relay messages from official federal, state and local leaders. Further, only public media's infrastructure can deliver these services nationwide, especially to underserved Americans who lack reliable access to other forms of communication when it matters most.

Nationally, the public television interconnection system serves as a distribution point for PBS WARN, an essential part of FEMA's nationwide Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), which manages the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system. The WEA system relies upon public broadcasters to ensure delivery of messages that include imminent threats to life and safety, AMBER Alerts, and Presidential Alerts during a national emergency. PBS, working with public television stations, is leveraging stations' existing infrastructure to provide situational awareness tools to emergency management officials. However, more can be done in software development to create products that meet the needs of emergency managers throughout the country, including: allowing alerts to be selected based on type, location, originator, and other options; building a look-back function for increased situational awareness;

and establishing light-up/alarm features to notify that an alert has been issued in the Emergency Operations Center's geographic area. These improvements will serve as a starting point for stations to expand their public safety footprint, and the NGRWS grant program could leverage this existing infrastructure to enhance and expand public safety services.

The public radio interconnection system, Public Radio Satellite System® (PRSS), managed by NPR, receives a national Emergency Alert Service (EAS) feed directly from FEMA and distributes Presidential emergency alerts to NPR-member stations. PRSS is also a named resource in at least 20 states' emergency plans, and many of the public radio stations in these twenty states serve as a Primary Entry Point (PEP) station. The PRSS national network of nearly 400 interconnected public radio stations act as a support for secure, reliable communications during emergencies without relying on the Internet, which may become unreliable.

At the state and local level, many stations serve as their states' primary EAS hub for weather and AMBER Alerts. For example, Alabama Public Television's (APT) microwave system serves as the backbone of Alabama's EAS, distributing national, state and local emergency broadcast signals to all radio and television broadcasters throughout the state. APT is also the hub for Alabama's AMBER Alert to track missing children. In Montana, MontanaPBS provides the Governor's Office, the Montana National Guard and the Department of Emergency Services access to their infrastructure to implement a statewide public safety information and communications network, reaching 95 percent of the state population.

In times of natural and human-made disasters, enabled public radio stations use MetaPub technology to deliver graphic alerts and messages such as weather forecasts and shelter information. For example, California stations successfully tested the use of MetaPub alerting during the Great California Shakeout earthquake drill in 2016 and demonstrated how stations can provide emergency communications to affected audiences. During evacuations in Mississippi, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency works with Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB) to broadcast evacuation and traffic information on all MPB radio stations.

Utilizing their broadcast infrastructure and dedicated to serving their community, stations are increasingly partnering with local first responders and emergency management officials to offer datacasting technology. Through datacasting, television broadcast spectrum is used to securely transmit essential, encrypted information to first responders in the field in real-time. Datacasting does not have the capacity constraints of traditional mobile or broadband delivery. Its applications include equipping police cars with the ability to receive school blueprints when a crisis arises, providing access to 24/7 camera feeds for public safety challenges, and connecting public safety agencies in real-time.

Initially tested in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, datacasting technology has been utilized during numerous events in the last several years, including the NCAA Final Four, the Super Bowl and Hurricane Harvey. In 2018, KVIE public television in Sacramento, CA worked with the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to test public television's datacasting capability to deliver early earthquake warnings faster. The station delivered an early earthquake warning in under three seconds compared to the previous warning standard of 30 seconds. Lastly, in Tennessee, public television stations

(WKNO, Memphis; WLJT, Lexington; WNPT, Nashville; WCTE, Cookeville; East Tennessee PBS, Knoxville; and WTCI, Chattanooga) recently joined with the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security to form the first statewide datacasting network.

In June 2018, the FCC's CSRIC Working Group 2 issued a final report on "Comprehensive Re-imaging of Emergency Alerting." Section 6.4 states, "PBS and local public television stations play a crucial role in protecting communities by using datacasting to deliver essential information to individuals and first responders. These benefits are all made possible by public broadcasting stations' unique reach, reliability, and role across America, and are especially vital in rural and underserved areas."

While public media stations are dedicated to serving the needs of their communities, their ability to provide these life-saving public safety services relies on technical infrastructure that is often aging past its end-of-life. In 2017, CPB commissioned a comprehensive System Technology Assessment to better understand public media stations' technology needs. The station response rate was unprecedented (73 percent of radio and 92 percent of television licensees), cataloging more than 60,000 pieces of equipment throughout the system. The assessment found that if equipment and funding needs evolve as projected, the system will face more than a \$300 million shortfall by 2020. Without resources to maintain, replace, and enhance broadcast transmission infrastructure on schedule, TV and radio licensees of all sizes and types could face operating challenges nationwide, disrupting the essential public safety service these stations provide.

Consistent with the recommendations in the *Modernizing the Nation's Public Alert and Warning System* report from the FEMA National Advisory Council, February 15, 2019, the Next Generation Resilient Warning System would enable the expansion and enhance the reliability of the alert, warning and interoperable communications activities that public broadcasting stations are committed to, while providing first responders and public safety officials with access to new communication resources.

With your support, public media entities can continue to serve the American people with reliable and resilient public safety infrastructure. 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 our funding request.