

**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 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.