

**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 28, 2017**

Chairman Cole, 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 the community. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests level funding of \$445 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, \$55 million in FY 2018 for the replacement of the public broadcasting interconnection system, and \$30 million for Ready To Learn at the Department of Education.

As we mark the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act, this uniquely American public-private partnership continues to keep its promise—to provide high-quality, trusted content that educates, inspires, informs and enriches in ways that benefit our civil society. Through the nearly 1,500 locally owned and operated public radio and television stations across the country, public media reaches 99 percent of the American people from big cities to small towns and rural communities. At approximately \$1.35 per citizen per year it is one of America's best infrastructure investments—paying huge dividends in education, public safety and civic leadership for millions of Americans and their families.

The federal investment in public media is indispensable to sustaining the essential public service mission of America's public media stations defined by community-based accountability and universal service. CPB serves as the steward of the federal appropriation, ensuring that 95 cents of every dollar we receive goes to support local stations and the programs and services they offer to their communities; no more than five cents of every dollar goes to the administration of funding programs and overhead. The appropriation is vital seed money—especially for stations

serving small towns and rural America, as well as those serving underserved populations where the appropriation can represent as much as 80 or even 100 percent of their budget.

Education is the heart of our mission. Public media reaches 68 percent of all children age two to eight, providing educational content and services that are proven to prepare them for school, especially those low-income and underserved children who do not attend or cannot afford pre-school. An excellent example of how public media brings together high-quality educational content with on-the-ground work in local communities is CPB's work with the Department of Education's Ready To Learn program. More than 25 years ago, Congress recognized the reach and potential of public media to help disadvantaged children become better prepared to enter school. In 2015, Congress reaffirmed its support of Ready To Learn, furthering public media stations' and producers' work in coordinating and connecting STEM and literacy learning experiences for children across multiple platforms and outlets.

Our work does not end with early education. Through CPB's "American Graduate" initiative, public media focuses on addressing the crisis of one million young people failing to graduate from high school every year. Since 2011, more than 120 public media stations in 49 states have worked with 1,700 partners to raise awareness, attract mentors for young people, and create local solutions for long-term success. I am pleased to report that in 2015, the high school graduation rate rose to 83 percent for the first time in our nation's history. As these new graduates continue their education through career, technical, or university instruction, public media will provide them with high quality content and resources to support their efforts.

CPB's investments are guided by our commitment to innovation, diversity and engagement. As good stewards, we are always investing in innovation so that stations can deliver public media programming over multiple media platforms—free of charge and commercial

free—available to our audience where and when and how they choose to access our content. Our commitment to diversity includes geographic, socio-economic, political, ethnic, and cultural—at all levels of public media. Our stations, locally owned and operated, also act as conveners, providing a multiplier effect in terms of content connected to engagement on issues of importance both locally and nationally.

Our fifty-year old but evergreen mission directs us to tell America’s constantly evolving story utilizing diverse voices and talents, to fund high quality educational, informational and inspirational content, to fund lifelong learning for our youngest and oldest citizens, and to invest in trusted journalism, locally, nationally and internationally. CPB fulfills its diversity mission, in part, by providing funding for the Independent Television Service, the five Minority Consortia entities in television, several public radio consortia, and numerous minority public radio stations. Moreover, CPB makes direct investments in the development of diverse primetime and children’s broadcast programs as well as innovative digital content.

In this disruptive and fragmented media environment, public media’s commitment to serving as a trusted source of information—providing in-depth factual coverage, when it comes to news and fact-based information, as well as a civil place for the exchange of ideas locally and nationally—is more important and relevant to people’s lives than ever. Public broadcasters have retained the trust of the American people for accurate, balanced, objective, fair, transparent, and thoughtful coverage of news and public affairs—the essential resources for an informed citizenry, the foundation upon which a well-functioning democracy depends.

Public media’s mission is to deliver value to the American people in the form of content that gives them the information they need to understand our changing world, to raise their families, teach their children, improve their communities, spark intellectual curiosity and

enhance daily life. Over the past three years CPB, working with public television and radio stations, launched Veteran's Coming Home an initiative designed to support veterans' re-entry into civilian life. Public media recognizes the contribution and sacrifices of the men and women serving in our Armed Forces through content such as "Military Medicine: Beyond the Battlefield," which tells the personal stories of physicians, military personnel, wounded warriors and their families in terms of how medical advances are changing lives; as well as StoryCorps' Military Voices initiative and the annual Memorial Day and Fourth of July concerts broadcast and streamed by PBS to millions.

When it comes to public safety, locally owned and operated public media stations are essential partners with public safety officials, schools, businesses and community leaders, providing real-time support in times of crisis. Public media stations broadcast crucial warnings about severe weather, send out AMBER alerts, and through data-casting capabilities, they work with first responders to deploy public media's infrastructure in a variety of life-saving ways.

Spectrum Auction: The vast majority of public television stations did not participate in the spectrum auction and will not receive auction proceeds, neither will CPB nor will PBS. By law, all spectrum auction proceeds will go to the nonprofit entity or state or local governmental body that holds the license for that station. License-holders can use the revenue in any manner it chooses—even for purposes outside of public broadcasting. For those stations that participated, this one time only influx of monies may allow the recipients to strengthen their financial foundation, enhance their local educational mission, and increase their service to their communities. But for all other stations and public media writ large, the continued federal investment is essential to sustaining this valued service for all Americans.

Public television as well as some public radio stations will also bear the costs of the spectrum repacking process, and it is not certain that the \$1.75 billion that Congress has set aside to cover the costs of the repack will be sufficient. Further, the spectrum auction process does not provide any financial assistance to public television stations for translators needed to change channels in the repack. This places an undue financial burden on those stations since they will assume the extra expense as they seek to ensure universal access.

Interconnection Infrastructure: Interconnection is the backbone of the public media system. It delivers content from public media producers to public television and radio stations in communities throughout the country. Without it, there is no nationwide public media service. Congress, recognizing the need, has always funded public media's interconnection system; providing a separate appropriation for interconnection since FY 1991. As we near the expiration of public television's and radio's interconnection systems, CPB has helped PBS and NPR to develop a plan for the most cost effective and efficient delivery system possible.

Conclusion: CPB's FY 2020 request of \$445 million and FY 2018 requests of \$55 million and \$30 million for interconnection and Ready To Learn, respectively, balance the fiscal reality facing our nation with our statutory mandate to provide a valuable and trusted service to all Americans. With your support, CPB will continue to serve as a trusted steward of the federal appropriation; by investing these precious taxpayer dollars in ways that strengthen the health of our democratic system and our civil society—helping to educate our youth, making Americans more aware of our nation's challenges and opportunities, connecting to our history, and engaging our citizens in their communities. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony, and I appreciate your consideration of our funding request.