

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &  
Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &  
Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you consider the FY 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education & Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, we urge you to continue to support funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Department of Education's Ready To Learn program, and the Public Broadcasting Interconnection Systems.

The federal investment into these programs is crucial to providing education, public safety and civic leadership to all Americans. These services have helped over three generations of Americans learn to read, while also improving the math and literacy skills of many children living in high-need areas across the country. Public media is successfully providing in-depth news, information, and cultural programming to many parts of our country that are traditionally underserved and unprofitable for traditional media sources.

For every federal dollar invested into public broadcasting, local stations raise an average of six dollars to match this. This highly successful public-private partnership has provided the necessary revenue to serve the needs of viewers across the nation. Today, approximately 70% of the funds appropriated to CPB go directly to the more than 1,500 independently licensed and controlled public television and radio stations. These stations also support approximately 20,000 media jobs in communities across the nation.

Public media has shown a strong commitment to educating and servicing all Americans. Because of these efforts, innovative and educational programming is readily available to children, parents, teachers, senior citizens, those pursuing their general education degree and many others. Thus, Americans at all income levels have access to consistent, high-quality content, free of charge.

Public broadcasting has continued to make significant contributions to children's education through the Ready To Learn program. Many of the studies that took place during the Ready To Learn competitive grant deployment have proven that this vital program's content builds and improves upon the early literacy and math skills for children living in high-need areas. Targeting children between the ages of two and eight, Ready To Learn reached 15.5 million viewers from May 2016 to April 2017. For the 54% of American children who do not have the means nor opportunity to attend preschool, Ready To Learn content has provided an essential "school readiness" experience.

Public safety is another mission that public broadcasters have also embraced. In times of national emergency, public broadcasters have actively participated in the presidential alerting system. Today, the combined strength of local public radio and television broadcast signals can reach 99% of the American population. Public television stations are also providing critical redundancy through the Warning, Alert, and Response Network, by sending geo-targeted Wireless Emergency Alert messages from FEMA to cellular carriers.

Many broadcast stations are also effectively assisting state and local public safety, law enforcement and first responder organizations. By connecting these agencies with one another, the public, and with vital datacasting capabilities, first responders are now able to use broadcast spectrum to send critical information and video during times of crisis. Several recent datacasting pilots conducted by the Department of Homeland Security, in conjunction with public television stations, have demonstrated the ability of this technology to help address the communications challenges facing the public safety community.

Our public broadcasting system is a unique American institution that strengthens our local communities and enables all Americans to have free, locally produced programming as well as in-depth reporting. Public broadcasting offers original content with region-specific coverage of issues that no one else provides.

Public broadcasters have retained the trust of the American people in the comprehensive, transparent, objective and civil coverage of news and public affairs, serving as essential resources for a well-informed citizenry. Whether it is a state high school athletic tournament, public access to sessions of a State Legislature, or debate coverage of a local election, public broadcasting keeps America's communities informed.

This is especially true in rural areas where public broadcasting stations can be the only source of free, high-quality local programming available. Funding from CPB can amount to more than half of some rural stations' budgets, a gap that cannot be closed by increasing underwriting revenues or donor support.

All of the vital services mentioned depend on public broadcasting's interconnection system. This is the technological infrastructure and supporting operations that provide every local public media station across the country with access to programming from national, regional and independent content providers. Public broadcasting's public safety work also relies on interconnection as the failsafe for presidential alerts and warnings and ensures that cellular customers can receive geo-targeted emergency alerts and warnings.

For more than 20 years Congress has provided separate funding for public broadcasting's interconnection systems which are the backbone of public broadcasting. The needed updates of the public television and radio interconnection systems are now underway. This update represents an essential element of public broadcasting's continued public media service, including the ability to provide highly reliable public safety services. Thank you for your recognition of this important project and for the first few years of funding provided in FY 2016 and FY 2017. Continued funding is needed in FY 2019 to proceed with the critical work that is now underway.

The longstanding practice of two-year advance appropriations for CPB, which was enacted by President Ford in 1976, allows stations the ability to maximize fundraising efforts to leverage the

promise of federal dollars for local impact, ensuring the continuation of this strong public-private partnership. The two-year advance funding mechanism also gives stations critical lead-time needed to plan and produce high-quality programming.

Thank you for your attention to this request, and we urge you to continue our investment in public broadcasting during the next fiscal year.

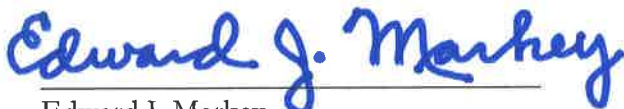
Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



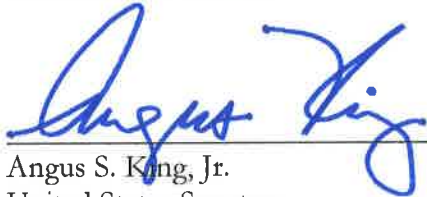
Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



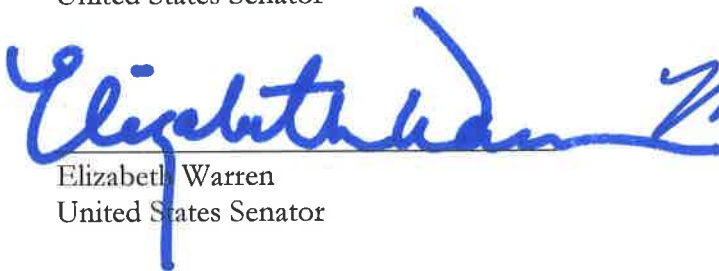
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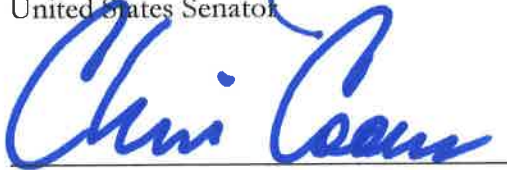
Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III  
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Richard Blumenthal  
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Gary C. Peters  
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Amy Klobuchar  
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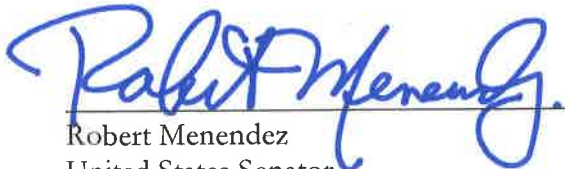
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



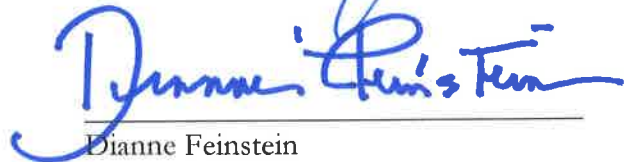
Joe Donnelly  
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Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
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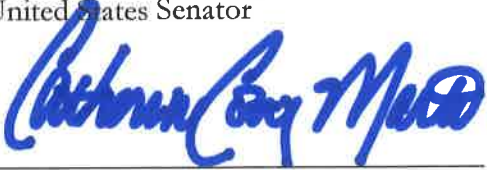




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Jack Reed  
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Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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United States Senator



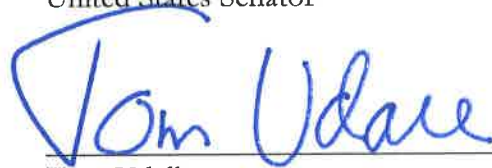
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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Cardin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Bill Nelson  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C. A. Booker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan M. Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S".

Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator