

Chairman Longmuir and the House Political Subdivision committee,

My name is Mary Balstad. I am a young, aspiring woman from rural Northern Minnesota. I attended Concordia College in Moorhead, MN and now work in Fargo, ND. For most of my life, I attribute my drive and ambition to the media I consumed growing up, which includes a healthy dose of public television.

I am writing this testimony in opposition to HB1255.

As someone who grew up in a rural area, access to educational media such as public television was critical outside of the traditional education system. Watching PBS Kids helped me understand concepts that were sometimes foreign. Having age-appropriate entertainment that taught morals, values and ethics through a family-friendly lens helped shape who I am today. Prairie Public Broadcasting provided this service where I lived in northern Minnesota.

Even though Minnesotans may not have a stake in North Dakota politics, by passing HB1255 you would fundamentally strip this access to education and age-appropriate entertainment from the young minds of North Dakota. The future teachers, doctors, politicians, police officers, and community leaders that could have these lessons taken from them due to not funding the only publicly available media in the entire Peace Garden State.

Stripping state funding would take away the ability to share the arts, culture and history of North Dakota and its residents. Prairie Public Broadcasting continues to highlight and help North Dakota citizens through documentaries like the recently released “Trapped in Paradise” or by bringing a comprehensive view of local state politics through a show like North Dakota Legislative Review. Prairie Public Broadcasting is also a backbone of the Emergency Alert System, providing vital information in times of crisis. Imagine if a tragedy like the Palisades fire happened here in North Dakota, but no one knew what to do because the public service providing this alert could not function due to lack of state funds.

At 26-years-old, I now work for Prairie Public Broadcasting. The place that once became a crucial educational source for me is continuing to educate and entertain well into my adulthood. Fact-based reporting of current events and publicly available services have helped inform and teach me about this state. However, this information could be taken away because of no state funding.

Chairman Longmuir and the House Political Subdivision committee, I urge you to recommend a “Do Not Pass” on HB1255, not only for myself but for the many other young minds that currently rely or grew up with Prairie Public Broadcasting. A service that continues to enlighten, educate and entertain the entire state of North Dakota for 60 years and counting.

Thank you,

Mary Balstad