

Testimony on HB 1255
House Political Subdivisions Committee
John Harris, President & CEO
Prairie Public Broadcasting
January 30, 2025

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about HB 1255.

I am John Harris, President and CEO of Prairie Public Broadcasting.

On behalf of Prairie Public Broadcasting, its staff, Board of Directors, Members, and the citizens that know Prairie Public is an essential organization for our State, I request you give a DO NOT PASS to HB 1255.

In 2024, Prairie Public celebrated 60 years of service to North Dakota. We began in 1964 with a single broadcast tower, and since then have grown to provide public media services that impact the citizens of our entire state—from childhood through all phases of life.

Education is the cornerstone of Prairie Public’s mission. We provide researched, high-quality digital resources and learning materials to students, educators, parents, counselors, librarians, and tech coordinators, and we conduct professional training opportunities to help them use those tools in our region’s classrooms.

Prairie Public provides public media services that educate, involve, and inspire the people of the prairie region. Public media strengthens communities and helps them to prosper. The citizens of North Dakota know the importance of a strong and viable public media entity for our community. We are committed to respect for our audience, civil discourse, and lifelong learning.

In addition, Prairie Public has embraced our public safety mission to maximize our spectrum for the public good. Public television stations are the backbone of the WARN system of presidential alerts in times of national emergency. Prairie Public is vital to our state as a locally owned and operated media organization that can serve in times of crisis.

Even as public distrust of national institutions and media is at an all-time high, studies show that public broadcasters retain the trust of the American people as an essential resource for well-informed citizens.

Prairie Public is a reliable source for international, regional, and local news from the worlds of politics, business, science, and the arts. In fact, our network of television, radio, and online services was one of the most comprehensive and trusted sources for statewide election coverage and debates during the 2024 election—vital for thoughtful citizens and healthy societies. Our coverage of the North Dakota legislature, including the long-running program *North Dakota Legislative Review* and the new podcast *In Session*, helps you to serve your constituents and communicate the good work you accomplish.

Our local productions cover topics ranging from community events to rural healthcare issues to legislative news. We partner with local agencies to help inform our citizens of critical issues that affect each and every one of us.

Prairie Public helps to preserve the history and culture of our region with locally produced documentaries. We celebrate local artists with our series *Prairie Musicians* and *Prairie Mosaic*. We interview newsmakers and difference makers weekdays on *Main Street* and weekly on *Prairie Pulse*.

The state of North Dakota has, for years, played a vital supporting role in the operation of our public media services. While the appropriation from the state of North Dakota does not cover all the expenses, many of the services would not be possible without state funding that provide the foundation for support from many other sources. It is important that North Dakota sustain its public media system.

Prairie Public and its members are deeply grateful for the past support from the State of North Dakota. In all the years Prairie Public has been broadcasting, technology keeps changing, but our mission to provide services that educate, involve, and inspire has not.

In closing, let me remind you that Prairie Public belongs to the citizens of our region, and with your support Prairie Public will continue to be a community leader and assist the state in achieving its goals of economic strength, educational quality, and pride in our rich heritage.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time and consideration.



Annual Financial Report

for the Year Ending 9/30/24 • Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

Sources	Television		Radio		Total
	Amount	%	Amount	%	
Membership	\$1,545,017	15%	\$525,091	16%	\$2,070,108
Underwriting	\$152,884	2%	\$129,836	4%	\$282,720
Corporation for Public Broadcasting	\$1,717,289	16%	\$233,068	7%	\$1,950,357
Local Production Funding	\$119,485	1%	\$76,625	2%	\$196,110
State of North Dakota ¹	\$1,296,225	12%	\$200,000	6%	\$1,496,225
State of Minnesota ¹	\$869,779	8%	\$0	0%	\$869,779
Grants	\$157,933	2%	\$0	0%	\$157,933
Fees, Rents	\$743,915	7%	\$319,711	10%	\$1,063,626
Charitable Gaming	\$1,198,945	12%	\$564,210	17%	\$1,763,155
Planned Giving ²	\$1,578,998	15%	\$732,990	23%	\$2,311,988
Other ³	\$1,057,604	10%	\$485,587	15%	\$1,543,191
TOTAL SOURCES	\$10,438,074	100%	\$3,267,118	100%	\$13,705,192
Uses					
Programming & Production	\$2,749,019	29%	\$1,427,399	39%	\$4,176,418
Engineering	\$1,283,225	13%	\$274,916	8%	\$1,558,141
Administration ³	\$1,596,043	17%	\$751,080	21%	\$2,347,123
Fundraising	\$362,922	4%	\$86,967	2%	\$449,889
System Upgrade & Other	\$1,695,336	18%	\$383,656	11%	\$2,078,992
Change in Prairie Public Endowment	\$1,863,513	19%	\$706,999	19%	\$2,570,512
TOTAL USES	\$9,550,058	100%	\$3,631,017	100%	\$13,181,075
EXCESS (DEFICIT) SOURCES OVER USES	\$888,016		(\$363,899)		\$524,117

Financial data provided from Eide Bailly LLP audited financial statements of Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

1. Revenues include on-going and general revenue, and additional revenue from one-time funding available for capital projects; North Dakota, \$896,225 and Minnesota, \$147,260.

2. Planned giving includes contributions, realized gains, and unrealized gains to Endowment Funds.

3. Other sources include \$1,117,083 of revenue from insurance claims related to tower sites and the Fargo Building. Related expenses are recognized as incurred among the list of uses. Administration includes \$553,845 in repairs to the Fargo Building.

Local support composed of membership and underwriting is the largest source of unrestricted support for Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.