

My name is Kasandra Shipley, and I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1255. As a former employee of Prairie Public and a current employee of GBH in Boston, I have seen firsthand the vital role that Prairie Public plays in the lives of North Dakotans. Eliminating funding for the state's only PBS and NPR station would be a mistake.

Prairie Public is available for free to anyone with a television and an over-the-air antenna. Not everyone has access to cable or internet—especially in rural areas, among elderly residents, and in households with young children. Representative Jorin Johnson recently stated, “There’s an abundance of free or low-cost content available online, suggesting that public broadcasting is now redundant.” However, this assumption ignores the reality that many North Dakotans simply do not have internet access at home. Without Prairie Public, what alternative do these individuals have?

Prairie Public enriches communities through high-quality arts, science, and educational programming. I spoke with many seniors who were deeply grateful to watch the ballet at The Met or a thought-provoking Ken Burns documentary from the comfort of their homes. Prairie Public also produces invaluable local content, including the Dakota Datebook series, Germans from Russia series and weekly broadcasts of North Dakota’s own Lawrence Welk. Who else will preserve and share North Dakota’s unique history if not Prairie Public?

For young families, Prairie Public is more than just a television station—it is a trusted educational resource. Research has shown that children who watch Super Why! score 46% higher on standardized tests. Parents can feel confident that their children are engaging with safe, educational programming that fosters a love of learning.

Defunding Prairie Public would mean stripping North Dakotans of a vital source of information, culture, and education. It would disproportionately harm those who depend on free, accessible programming the most. I urge you to reject HB 1255 and continue funding this invaluable public service. Prairie Public is more than just television and radio—it is a lifeline for communities across the state.

Sincerely,
Kasandra Shipley