

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 1255

My name is Siobhan Fevig, and I am the Membership Manager at Prairie Public, where I have worked for the past ten years. I am here today to strongly oppose House Bill 1255, which would cut state funding to Prairie Public Broadcasting.

At 16, I became a mother. My daughter and I lived in poverty, often without internet or cable, relying on Prairie Public as our primary source of education, news, and entertainment. Prairie Public's children's programming helped her learn reading, math, science, and emotional regulation—skills that proved essential as she navigated school with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for ADHD and anxiety.

Ten years ago, I took a chance and applied for an entry-level position at Prairie Public, despite having no office experience. They took a chance on me, and that opportunity changed our lives. I worked my way up to Membership Manager, and today, my daughter is thriving—recently earning a 4.0 GPA and putting herself through college debt-free. Prairie Public helped us defy the statistics.

Cutting state funding will not harm policymakers—it will harm the most vulnerable. Public broadcasting ensures access to free, high-quality education for children, families, and rural communities. Education should not be behind a paywall.

PBS and NPR do more than inform; they foster empathy, inclusion, and a broader worldview. Some argue Prairie Public should rely solely on donations, but in times of economic hardship, when families can't afford groceries, they certainly can't afford to donate. State funding provides stability to continue vital services, regardless of the economy.

Without state support, Prairie Public will remain operational, but essential community outreach and education programs will suffer:

Educational Services: Our mobile education units provide resources to underserved rural communities, giving teachers and students free resources and support.

Local Journalism: Our dedicated news team works tirelessly to highlight the stories that matter to North Dakotans, giving a voice to local communities, rural towns, and issues that are often overlooked by larger media outlets.

Support for Rural Areas: Many depend on Prairie Public for news, early childhood education, and programs they may not otherwise have access to.

Preserving North Dakota's History: Prairie Public produces and airs local documentaries that highlight our state's history, traditions, and people—ensuring that our stories are preserved and shared for generations to come.

Emergency Broadcast Network: Prairie Public is a critical part of North Dakota's emergency alert system, providing life-saving information during severe weather, natural disasters, and other crises.

I urge you to vote no on House Bill 1255. Defunding Prairie Public would strip thousands of North Dakotans of access to critical resources that help them learn, grow, and stay informed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.