

March 7, 2025

To: N.D. Senate State and Local Government Committee  
From: Josh Kramer, executive vice president and general manager, NDAREC  
RE: **Opposition to HB 1255 – Public broadcasting funds**

Chairwoman Roers and members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee,

I'm Josh Kramer, the general manager of the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC), which represents 17 electric distribution cooperatives and five generation and transmission cooperatives that generate, transmit and distribute electricity across the state of North Dakota.

NDAREC is also the only statewide electric cooperative trade association in the country to be actively engaged in rural development work, which demonstrates our commitment to rural communities and rural people extends beyond keeping the lights on.

NDAREC opposes HB 1255 for two primary reasons.

The first reason is a matter of public safety. In energy emergencies or during weather events which cause power outages, North Dakota's electric cooperatives utilize numerous communications platforms and resources to disseminate information. In these situations, it is essential for electric cooperatives to be able to explain what happened, what they are doing to fix the problem and what they want co-op members to do. These messages are critical for public safety. Public broadcasting, particularly radio because of its immediacy, has been an important delivery vehicle for these messages to reach rural North Dakotans.

The second reason NDAREC opposes HB 1255 lies in the cooperative principles, which guide our work. Cooperative Principle No. 7 is "concern for community," and electric cooperatives care about quality of life in rural communities. Public broadcasting provides a host of educational and informational programming to rural citizens, which can be accessed for free. This kind of programming can be a lifeline for people in rural areas, who often live in news deserts or places which lack sources of local news and information.

Continued funding for public broadcasting is important for rural people and places, and NDAREC urges a "DO NOT PASS" on HB 1255.