

Chair and Committee Members:

I am Jean Newborg, a retired resident of ND and a long time member of Prairie Public Broadcasting (PPB). I **strongly oppose HB 1255** which would eliminate state funding for Prairie Public.

I believe that state funding for PPB should continue and at an even higher level than in the past. This written testimony states my reasons.

**PPB is an extremely beneficial component of North Dakota's educational system.**

Having an educated and informed public/electorate is an essential requirement for this state to progress and thrive economically and socially, and that is an important part of PPB's mission. **Everyone** needs the opportunity to be educated and informed. Through long standing mutually beneficial collaborations PPB reinforces and enhances the educational work of many state agencies, the ND University System, numerous nonprofit organizations, and other entities.

**PPB provides statewide coverage to virtually all its residents through its**

**comprehensive network of transmitters and translators.** Through its affiliation with Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), PPB plays a crucial role in protecting communities by ensuring uninterrupted distribution of Wireless Emergency Alerts, including severe weather warnings and Amber alerts. Also, it can send alternate message warnings even if a cybersecurity incident or internet disruption breaks connections with FEMA. It should be noted as well that some ND broadcast networks depend on PPB towers.

**PPB gives paywall-free access to all.** If I do not contribute, PPB will not shut off my signal. Unlike streaming, podcasts and other services, **there is no charge.** There are requests for voluntary contributions but no minimum donation is required for membership – you donate according to the value you place on the service. If one cannot afford it or just doesn't want to contribute they can still listen/view. Many people give more support and are glad to do it so everyone can benefit, no matter their budget.

**PPB on-air programming serves every age** from early childhood to advanced age. Its **content** includes age-appropriate professionally developed topics and materials for early childhood. Programming that touches on school subjects (math, science, history, etc.) aligns with ND's high educational standards that were developed and periodically revised with much input by ND's teachers. Relatedly, PPB offers professional development opportunities to teachers.

**PPB offers numerous opportunities to learn about local and regional culture, history, music, art, environment, entertainment.** Programming offers a seemingly endless number of interest areas that allows viewers/listeners to not only follow their favorites but learn of others and expand their horizons.

**PPB is a reliable and credible source of local and regional news, as PBS and NPR are for national and international news.** They fact-check information before it is broadcast, their journalists have a great depth of knowledge in the topic they are covering and ask thoughtful questions of informed guests. They present **balanced interviews** with persons of differing/ opposing views making their points in a civil manner. News stories typically are longer and have greater depth than those of other news outlets allowing listeners to get a more complete understanding of complex situations. Call-in programs promote public information exchange and varying perspectives through respectful discussion. News from foreign sources provide a more global perspective of important world issues.

**In conclusion, PPB has strong, effective, and accountable leadership as well as a thoughtful, informed, and broadly representative Board. It has consistently demonstrated that it is a good steward of public funding, whether through legislative action or voluntary membership. Voluntary contributions alone, however, cannot cover all expenses for operations and especially infrastructure. Given that PPB, using free statewide public access through 3 radio and 3 television channels, to consistently deliver high quality educational, information, and entertainment offerings for ND residents of all ages, it is reasonable to request and receive monies from the State of North Dakota considering the benefits and value realized by its residents. Prairie Public IS a priority funding issue!**

Thank you for this opportunity to share my views on the importance of continuing funding for Prairie Public Broadcasting. If you have never tuned in, I invite you to do so.