

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 1255

March 6, 2025

Chairperson Roers and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bethany Andrist, and I am a mother of three children and a proud member of Prairie Public for the past 18 years. I strongly oppose House Bill 1255, which seeks to eliminate state funding for Prairie Public Broadcasting.

Prairie Public provides free, high-quality educational content that supports families and schools, preparing young children for success in school and beyond. I grew up watching Sesame Street and Mister Rogers' Neighborhood every day, and I am so grateful that my children have done the same. These programs are backed by rigorous research and have been proven to help children develop literacy, math skills, and emotional intelligence during the most critical early years of development. Science tells us that from birth to age five, a child's brain is growing at its fastest rate, and Prairie Public plays an essential role in ensuring all children, regardless of income level, have access to proven, educational programming.

Beyond its impact on young learners, Prairie Public inspires creativity and engagement. Two of my children have had the privilege of winning the PBS Kids Writers Contest for North Dakota, a program that fosters imagination, literacy, and confidence in young writers. Prairie Public also preserves and promotes the unique history and culture of our state, offering documentaries, interviews, and stories that highlight North Dakota's heritage such as Dakota Datebook, which partners with the State Historical Society of North Dakota. Programs like Main Street provide a fact-based platform that helps ensure that North Dakotans have access to well-researched, civil discourse on the issues that matter most. In a time when misinformation is rampant, Prairie Public remains a trusted source of news, history, and education for all of us, regardless of political affiliation. Thousands of North Dakotans rely on Prairie Public for unbiased news, in-depth storytelling, and lifelong learning opportunities. Eliminating state funding for Prairie Public would be a true loss for our children, families, and communities.

I urge you to reject HB 1255 and continue investing in this invaluable resource that strengthens education, civic engagement, and cultural preservation in North Dakota.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bethany Andrist