



Broadcast Educational Media Commission FY 20-21 Budget

Testimony before the Senate Higher Education Committee

Presented by Geoffrey A. Phillips, Executive Director

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams, members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding the FY 20-21 operating budget for the Broadcast Educational Media Commission.

My name is Geoffrey A. Phillips and it is my privilege to serve the citizens of Ohio as the Executive Director of the Broadcast Educational Media Commission.

Public Educational Television came to Ohio in 1954 and as a result of a 1960 legislative study the Ohio Educational Television Network Commission became a state entity in 1961. Over the past 58 years, the agency has had five unique names and yet one constant – public educational broadcasting.

Broadcast Educational Media Commission, our name since 2013, seeks to expand the knowledge of Ohio’s citizens through promotion of educational broadcasting products, funding of the state’s broadcast affiliates and organizations, and collaboration with stakeholders and advocates for technology-driven education.

BEMC has:

- A Commission of 11 members and a staff of 23
- A 24-hour / 7 days a week / 365 days a year operation
- Memorandums of Understanding to support Ohio’s 11 public TV stations, 36 public radio stations and six radio reading services
- Connection capability to link Ohio K-20 classrooms through live learning and content.

- Collaborations with the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Public TV stations to create a series of education-based multimedia videos in support of interactive learning
- Joint master control operation for Ohio's public television stations making BEMC one of the most technologically advanced public operations in the US
- Partnerships with many educational initiatives including serving on the Ohio Open Educational Resources Collaborative with InfOhio, being a leader in the Ohio Distance Learning Association, and working to create Media Arts educational standards with ODE's Fine Arts Standards Review Advisory Committee.

What we are doing at BEMC is the definition of "good government". By utilizing the most up-to-date technologies, centralizing and modernizing operations, becoming a leader within the world of educational broadcasting, and embracing the state's goal of IT Optimization, BEMC is serving as great stewards of taxpayer money while building for the future.

The FY 20-21 budget as presented is a strategic investment in the future of education in Ohio in both public broadcasting and distance learning.

BEMC's budget consists of two areas: **operational and subsidy**. The operational budget supports the everyday functions of the organization including educational broadcasting and interactive video conferencing operations and equipment, facilities expenditures, and administrative costs.

The House recommendation of **\$3,699,224** in FY 20 and FY21 will allow us to **maintain our current operations**, and yet stress BEMC to **build on our recent advancements and build for the future** – such as the recent expansion in coverage of Ohio House committee meetings, and, hopefully, soon an expansion of coverage of Ohio Senate committee meetings. We are strengthening our staff to ensure our 24/7/365 operation is fully covered to provide the best level of service to Ohio's public television stations, while upgrading equipment to ensure high-quality programming reaches all corners of the Buckeye state, day or night.

The subsidy budget distributes funds to all public television, public radio, and radio reading services across the state. BEMC works with each station through a memorandum of understanding for those funds and distributes those funds based on an agreed to formula each year after a financial report for the previous year details how those funds were used to benefit Ohioans.

The House recommendation of **\$5,911,704** in FY20 and **\$5,761,204** FY21 will allow public educational broadcasting in Ohio to simply maintain current operations without the funding to continue to innovate our technology.

Of note in the subsidy budget are funds for **Ohio Governmental Telecommunications**, including The Ohio Channel, and **Statehouse News Bureau**.

The Statehouse News Bureau is a non-partisan, professional news organization covering the statehouse and ensuring the citizens of Ohio are well-informed about state government. I'm sure many of you have talked with Bureau Chief Karen Kasler at some point during your statehouse tenure and understand the inherent value in having this reliable news source around Capitol Square.

Ohio Governmental Telecommunications, The Ohio Channel, is the broadcast entity you are most likely familiar with. The Ohio Channel broadcasts live House and Senate sessions and committee hearings, for all Ohioans to have open access to state government. OGT Executive Director Dan Shellenbarger will share testimony later to further define the OGT mission.

While we appreciate a budget recommendation equal to that of FY18-19 there is a need for additional operating expenses at BEMC to continue to properly staff and provide advance technical support in our 24/7/365 operation. Our commission requested an "Optimal Budget" - see attachment in the materials sent in advance of today's presentation - for FY20-21 with numbers that reflect our actual operational need. This "Optimal Budget" for BEMC is a total increase against the proposed budget of **\$1,025,000 in FY20 and \$623,000 in FY20**. This increase will allow us to properly staff our operations and fund vital technical upgrades to the Joint Master Control. Details of the "Optimal Budget" are included with my testimony.

Additionally, the “Optimal Budget” includes increases for both OGT and Statehouse News Bureau. The House version of the budget took into account the Optimal Budget request and calls for an increase to subsidy for OGT **totaling \$350,000 in FY20 and \$200,000 in FY21**. This is necessary to improve the technical and staffing levels to meet the needs of growing the broadcasting of House and Senate committees through the Ohio Channel. The increase for the Statehouse News Bureau is a modest **\$15,023 in both FY20 and 21** to allow for greater non-partisan news coverage of state government.

Also included in the “Optimal Budget” is a request for greater support for subsidies to Ohio’s public TV, Radio and Radio Reading Services and educational multi-media grants. Public media across the state of Ohio provides invaluable educational and local community content and restoring funding to pre-2008 recession levels will allow public media to continue to expand their offerings. You will hear more detail about this requested increase in a later presentation.

When the Broadcast Educational Media Commission and our public educational broadcasting partners embarked on the journey of modernizing our system of delivery and created one of the largest and most innovative public joint master control operations in the country it was a declaration from the state of Ohio that this investment in educational broadcasting was vital to the citizens of the state.

The future of education is in media, multi-media, and online platforms – technology – and BEMC is positioned as a leader in educational broadcasting technology. With this budget we can continue this innovative path, become a model for educational broadcasting in the country, and expand our educational opportunities of all Ohioans.

In conclusion, educational technology, including educational broadcasting and distance learning, is the future. Technology is not as a replacement for traditional education, but a supplement. Whether that is Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood, Downton Abbey, Antiques Roadshow or a locally produced show on Ohio’s public television stations, reading aloud from local newspapers to thousands of visually impaired persons, a series of videos created to help parents understand an IEP or the Third

Grade Reading Guarantee shared in an online platform, a teacher in Columbus teaching Mandarin Chinese to a group of high school students in rural Ohio through interactive video conferencing, this is the future of education.

The Broadcast Educational Media Commission will continue to be one of many leading the way as the state of Ohio modernizes and energizes the future of education for all students and for all Ohioans.

Thank you again, Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams, members of the Senate Higher Education Committee for the time here today. I welcome any questions you may have.