

Ohio House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee

Testimony from Kevin Martin, President and CEO, ideastream
On behalf of the Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Miller and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Kevin Martin, and I serve as President and Chief Executive Officer of ideastream in Cleveland.

ideastream is a multiple media public service organization that, like other public media organizations serving communities throughout the State, provides a range of educational and public services to the citizens of Ohio. Those services include multiple channel public television and radio stations which are widely appreciated and supported. In addition, public media organizations provide educational technology resources to schools and teachers, help train teachers how to improve education through technology and provide interactive video courses allowing schools to share valuable instructional resources. Public media organizations are also deeply involved in communities and act as community conveners encouraging citizen involvement in dialog about community issues. Collaborating together public stations work to serve the State through the Ohio Public Radio and Television Statehouse News Bureau and The Ohio Channel.

I arrived in Ohio just six weeks ago, but have worked in public broadcasting in Minnesota, Texas and California for over 25 years. I also spent time at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington DC. CPB is the organization that distributes federal funds to public broadcasting stations across the country. This experience gave me a good sense of how different states and different communities have organized to support their public stations, and the important programs and services those stations provide.

I can tell you, without hesitation, that the Ohio model is very much admired. Through more than a half-century of priority-setting State of Ohio policy, the stations are locally owned and controlled, but supported both, operationally and with state funding through the Broadcast Educational Media Commission. Training for teachers to implement educational technology programs is also supported through the Ohio Department of Education.

While the vast majority of funding for public broadcasting comes from viewers and listeners like you, the operational support and funding from the State of Ohio assures that all citizens and schools have access to the same quality programs and services.

The Broadcast Educational Media Commission (BEMC) is the State of Ohio agency with responsibility for public broadcasting and distance learning. The agency is doing a fabulous job of providing both operational support for stations and providing important grant funding for Ohio Government Telecommunications, the Ohio Public Radio and Television Statehouse News Bureau and Multiple Media Educational programs.

The Governor has recommended maintaining funding at the level of the current biennium for this agency. While appreciated, this funding level does not allow BEMC to run a high tech operation of this magnitude and manage growth into the future.

The agency is engaged in an exciting and important operational modernization program, yet operational support is at historically low levels. Direct state support for public broadcasting remains below 2008 levels.

Since that time, the television stations have gone from one to three or to five channels, taking advantage of the advancement of digital television technology. Just in the past couple of months, many stations have added a 24/7 PBS Kids channel with award-winning educational programs for children available twenty-four hours a day both via broadcast and on-line.

In addition, stations recently expanded their commitment to public safety service in creating the Ohio Emergency Alert System, supporting alerts and emergency messaging for the public, and in the future, serving first responders. Ohio is now a national leader in this field. .

Noting all of this, the Commissioners of the BEMC asked staff to develop an optimal budget. The Commission approved that budget unanimously and we respectfully request that you do all you can to assure that optimal budget is included in the 2018-2019 budget of the State of Ohio. It calls for an increase of \$1,462,808 in FY 2018 and \$1,565,836 in FY 2019 over the FY 2016 and FY 2017 appropriations, respectively.

The Ohio Department of Education supports educational technology agencies and their affiliated public television stations with funding to provide educational technology resources and training to schools. This funding was inexplicably slashed by more than 42% in the last biennium and is maintained at that reduced level in the Governor's budget recommendation. We ask that you do all you can to assure the funding level is restored. This requires an increase of \$751,703 for both FY 2018 and 2019.

Even after just a short time in Ohio, I can and do testify that the breadth and quality of support offered by public broadcasting stations here would not be possible without the operational and funding support from the State. For that, the people of Ohio are grateful.

This concludes my testimony.

Thank you for your past and continued support.

House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education

BEMC and ODOE Additional Budget Requests

Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications

On behalf of the Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications, we submit the following additional detail in support of the BEMC Commission optimal request for funding. The document also provides additional information on a relevant item of great interest to the television stations appearing in the Ohio Department of Education Budget. The Alliance will be happy to respond to any additional questions.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2018	FY 2019
GRF	935430	Broadcast Education Operating Formerly: General Operations (935408), Technology Operations (935409) & Information Technology (935412)	\$ 727,755	\$ 770,756
Annual Total:			\$ 727,755	\$ 770,756

The BEMC has simplified budgeting at the agency by aggregating the general operation budget lines.

The BEMC has provided details on this increase, which includes Personnel, Contracted Services and Maintenance Contracts.

This increase is consistent with the addition requests for the agency advocated by the Alliance two years ago and approved by the House and Senate.

Of particular concern to the Alliance members is the agency's ability to fund the increase in operating and personnel costs required to maintain and operate the brand-new, IP-based, North Star technology hub as it assumes the new role in creating 42 broadcast programming streams required to serve all of the 12 educational television station (eight licensees). As was anticipated in the previous budget cycle (but not funded in the final budget), BEMC now requires additional staff to nominally and efficiently operate the new content delivery system, allowing the state's public television stations to continue to operate 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2018	FY 2019
GRF	935401	Statehouse News Bureau (SNB)	\$ 9,734	\$ 19,762
GRF	935402	Ohio Government Television (OGT, Ohio Channel)	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000

The Statehouse News Bureau and Ohio Government Television are requesting additional funding to respond to changing needs in the digital communication world.

The Statehouse News Bureau is requesting an additional \$9,734/\$19,762 over the biennium to support the cost of operation and growing additional costs related to its video, audio, and social media services.

The Ohio Government Channel is requesting an additional \$50,000/\$100,000 each year to maintain its storage system in connection with the BEMC, and to increase coverage of official state events utilizing capital resources provided by the state.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2018	FY 2019
GRF	935410	Content Development, Acquisition and Distribution		
		Telecommunications Operating Subsidy	\$ 483,319	\$ 483,319
		Multimedia Projects Grant Program	\$ 192,000	\$ 192,000
Annual total:			\$ 675,319	\$ 675,319

During the “Great Recession”, subsidy funding for programming and related costs for Public Radio, Public Television and Radio Reading Services was reduced due to pressures on the state budget. Despite a much-appreciated increase in the current state budget, we have still not returned to the support levels provided before the recession.

During the past decade, the additional costs of multiple channel service (including OGT carriage) for radio and TV and increased overall costs mean that support from the General Assembly is down to an estimated less than 3% of the funding required to maintain the stations. During that time, the Federal Government and the State have both eliminated funding to support growing capital needs, putting even greater pressure on station operating budget and forcing them to divert over sources of support away from content to allow them to stay on the air. The capital costs incurred by stations also allows them to provide the new public safety services related to the critical OEAS system.

The radio and TV stations use the subsidy money to create local content that is provided to the public through both broadcast signals and through the internet. This funding supports both enhanced news coverage on both radio and TV, and projects such as the award-winning, now weekly, Columbus Neighborhoods series that has introduced central Ohio residents to their history in both long and short-form programs.

The increase in the Telecommunications Operating Subsidy is requested to simply return funding to the FY 2008 levels.

Multimedia Grant funds allow public television stations to leverage their governmental and community investments to utilize their unique core competencies in creating compelling video content for educational use. BEMC and the stations are partners with the Ohio Department of Education in creating videos, classroom materials and teacher guides consistent with educational needs and state priorities, such as jobs programs.

While the addition funding will allow for the expanded creation of videos and educational support materials, the requested funding will also allow the partners to take advantage of more efficient distribution achieved in the past two years. The DOE, the BEMC and the stations are working to promote usage of the uniquely Ohio-centric content, creating greater value for the investment.

In addition to station and DOE-designated websites, all of the content created in the state under the grant program is also posted on the national PBS Learning Media site.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUDGET

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2018	FY 2019
GRF	200465	Technology Integration and Professional Development		
		Educational Technology Resources (EdTech Training Centers)	\$ 751,703	\$ 751,703
		Annual total:	\$ 751,703	\$ 751,703

The Alliance fully supports efforts by the Educational Technology Resource Centers to return their funding to FY 2015 levels. During the budget process two years ago, the budget line sustained a more than a 42% reduction that only appeared when the final budget was released.

The Ed Tech agencies provide high-quality professional development and training designed to meet the needs of K-12 educators across the state at a time when technology is becoming an increasing element in education.

Nearly all of the Ed Tech centers now reside within public television stations to increase efficiencies and allow coordination with the stations' Education Department in the creation of educational content and training. As would be expected, the large, unanticipated reduction two years ago had a very negative impact on the agencies and the associate stations in fulfilling their missions to providing educational services. The Alliances seeks your support to restore that portion of the budget line.

FY 2018-2019 BEMC Executive Budget Recommendation and Additional Requests

				Final	Executive Budget Recommendation		Additional Request		Total FY 2018 Annual Request	Total FY 2019 Annual Request
Fund	ALI	ALI Name		FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2019		
GRF	935430	Broadcast Education Operating (new)		\$ -	3,793,006	3,793,006	727,755	770,756	\$ 4,520,761	\$ 4,563,761
GRF	935408	General Operations		\$ 495,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -
	935409	Technology Operations		\$ 2,743,962	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -
	935412	Information Technology		\$ 500,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -
										\$ -
4F30	935603	Affiliate Services		\$ 4,000	4,000	4,000	-	-	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
4T20	935605	Government Television/Telecommunications Operating		\$ 7,000	7,000	7,000	-	-	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000
5FK0	935608	Media Services		\$ 95,000	95,000	95,000	-	-	\$ 95,000	\$ 95,000
GRF	935401	Statehouse News Bureau		\$ 324,533	324,533	324,533	9,734	19,762	\$ 334,267	344,295
GRF	935402	Ohio Government Telecommunications Services		\$ 1,452,089	1,452,089	1,452,089	50,000	100,000	\$ 1,502,089	1,552,089
GRF	935410	Content Development, Acquisition and Distribution		\$ 3,957,094	3,957,094	3,957,094	675,319	675,319	\$ 4,632,413	4,632,413
BEMC Totals				\$ 9,578,678	\$ 9,632,722	\$ 9,632,722	\$ 1,462,808	\$ 1,565,837	\$ 11,095,530	\$ 11,198,558

Ohio Department of Education Budget

GRF	200465	Technology Integration and Professional Development	\$ 3,170,976	3,370,976	3,370,976	*
		Union Catalog/InfOhio Network	\$ 1,443,572			
		Educational Technology Resources (EdTech)	\$ 1,027,176	**	751,703	751,703 \$ 1,778,879 \$ 1,778,879
		Training/Tech Support/Guidance	\$ 700,228			

**\$751,703 increase returns EdTech line to FY 2015 level

*\$200,000 increase is not broken down by sub-line inside total 465 budget line



NEWS RELEASE

OHIO PUBLIC TELEVISION STATIONS PROVIDING AN INNOVATIVE NEW SERVICE TO SUPPORT PUBLIC SAFETY

Contact: Meredith Hart, OEAS Marketing Cooperative Director
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Columbus, Ohio – Ohio's Educational Television Stations have taken the leading role in developing and introducing a secure, alternative delivery system to provide Ohioans with emergency information without relying on the public internet.

OEAS Public AlertNet is a new statewide, multilingual, technology backbone using Ohio's 12 public television signals to deliver critical emergency alerts and messaging to other broadcasters and public safety officials, who in turn deliver them to the public. OEAS automatically provides Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) alerts and messaging in both English and Spanish, the first statewide system to do so. OEAS was successfully tested by originating an alert that was broadcast on-air across the state on December 14, 2016.

OEAS is a partnership with the stations, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA) and the state's Broadcast Educational Media Commission to leverage existing state and local investments in technology as the strongest, safest and least expensive way to get emergency information to the people who deliver it to the public.

Participants in the project include the Ohio Association of Broadcasters and the State Emergency Communications Committee, representing both the local commercial and educational radio and TV stations that are the heart of emergency messaging in Ohio. Start-up funding was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

"Existing emergency systems have failed during critical events such as Hurricane Sandy, but OEAS relies on broadcast signals immune to the hacking and information congestion that commercial Internet and wireless services can experience when the need is greatest," according to Dave Ford, Communications Branch Chief, Ohio EMA.

A single digital data stream with all digital emergency messaging for the state of Ohio is sent from the EMA headquarters in Columbus and delivered over state fiber to the 12 public television stations for broadcast. The system was initially designed to support the legacy Emergency Alerting System (EAS), but was built with the flexibility to add encrypted video and scale to the needs of new messaging systems as they are introduced.

With support from FEMA and the FCC, this innovative emergency alert service has received national attention from a variety of other states and the Ohio technology is being tested in California as a method to speed up earthquake warning. While we hope the public will never need to be aware of OEAS, the service is at the core of public broadcasting and speaks to the station's mission to serve our communities and help keep the public safe, today and into the future.

For additional information on the OEAS Public AlertNet, please contact Dave Carwile, administrator for Ohio Educational Television Stations at (614) 292.9567 or carwile.1@osu.edu.

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