



Broadcast
Educational
Media
Commission

Broadcast Educational Media Commission FY 18-19 Budget

Testimony before the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee

Presented by: Geoffrey A. Phillips, Executive Director

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Chairman Gardner, Vice-Chair Williams, members of the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding the Sub. HB49 – the FY 18-19 operating budget for the Broadcast Educational Media Commission.

My name is Geoffrey A. Phillips, for the past 22 months it has been my privilege to serve the citizens of Ohio as the Executive Director of the Broadcast Educational Media Commission.

Public Television Broadcasting came to Ohio in 1954. As the result of a 1960 legislative study, Ohio Educational Television Network Commission became a state entity in 1961. Over the past 56 years, the agency has had five unique names and yet one constant – public television broadcasting.

Broadcast Educational Media Commission, our name since 2013, serves the citizens and students of Ohio to ensure engaging educational broadcast and innovative interactive distance learning opportunities exist for all Ohioans.

BEMC has:

- A Commission of 11 members
- A staff of 23
- A 24-hour / 7 days a week / 365 days a year operation

- Memorandums of Understanding to support Ohio's 8 public TV stations, 36 public radio stations and six radio reading service programs
- Connection capability to link Ohio K-20 classrooms
- Collaboration in place 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
- Become a joint master control operation for Ohio's 42 channels of public television making BEMC one of the most technologically advanced operations in the country

While central-casting reduces costs at the stations' level, more importantly stations can increase focus on content development, which is the driving force in educational broadcasting. Such focus allows for the creation of more engaging, interactive content for students, teachers and parents.

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

As the former Treasurer for the City of Wilmington and the former County Treasurer for Clinton County I have absolute empathy for the fiscal situation the state of Ohio finds itself in and for the position you as leaders have in constructing a stable, healthy and balanced-budget that meets the needs of Ohioans.

While BEMC recognizes the financial situation the state now finds itself, however, allow us to illustrate the structure of the BEMC budget, how it affects our operational efficiency, and how we are serving the citizens of Ohio admirably.

Sub. HB 49, as passed by the House of Representatives, levels a 1.5% reduction against our budget. This reduction, while not ideal, can be shouldered by our organization. However, you will see how this reduction will have negative impacts on our operations and the advancements we have made.

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

The recommendation of **\$3,736,111** for both FY 18 and FY 19 is a reduction of **\$56,895** from the operations budget of BEMC presented in the Executive Budget and a reduction from our FY16-17 appropriation. While we will be able to absorb this loss, we will have to make decisions about equipment purchases, decisions that will result in equipment not being purchased. This will slow the progress we have made in modernization and could freeze needed advancements.

The subsidy budget distributes funds to all public television, 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 each year after a financial report for the previous year.

The recommendation of **\$5,753,711** for both FY 18 and FY 19 is a 1.5% reduction to the funds we distribute to Ohio's public television, radio, and Radio Reading Services programs and the very successful educational multimedia project done in conjunction with the Ohio public television stations and the Ohio Department of Education. This reduction will result in loss of **\$59,356** for FY18-19 and is a loss from the already low levels of funding in FY16-17.

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

The Statehouse News Bureau is non-partisan, professional reporting of statehouse happenings to ensure 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, as well as some 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.

Of the \$5,753,711 dollars in subsidy funds given to public media affiliates **\$319,665 is marked for the Statehouse News Bureau** and **\$1,430,308 is marked for Ohio Governmental Telecommunications**. These numbers equate to a loss of **\$4,868 for the Statehouse News Bureau** and a loss of **\$21,781 for Ohio Governmental Telecommunications**. These reductions in funding will have a negative effect on these operations.

The assignment we have at the Broadcast Educational Media Commission is multi-faceted working with our affiliate partners to ensure all Ohioans have access to high-quality, powerful, and diverse broadcast and educational opportunities.

The future of education is in media, multi-media, and online platforms – technology – and BEMC is positioned as a leader in educational technology.

In order to perform as a leader in educational technology BEMC's commission requested an "optimal" budget, in addition to the OBM submitted budget. This "optimal" budget is an illustration of what it would actually take to run a high-tech operation of this magnitude and to manage growth into the future.

Attached is a version of the "optimal" budget as requested by our Commission. This "optimal" budget is presented as a way to demonstrate, if we were to

operate optimally and efficiently, what it would truly take. We hope it gives you an idea of what an impressive operation we have in the state of Ohio.

Again, I sympathize with the Legislature and the Governor's office as you struggle with this budget, and I understand this "Optimal Budget" may, at this time, seem unrealistic or a stretch in light of the state's financial situation, but we have seen such incredible advancements in our optimization of technology and in our organizational efficiencies in becoming the best example of "good government" we can. Without, at least, 100% funding from FY16-17, we may be jeopardizing those advancements.

In conclusion, the future of education is in multi-media and online platforms. Not as a replacement for traditional education, but as a supplement. Whether that is Daniel Tiger, VIETNAM by Ken Burns, Antiques Roadshow, or a locally produced show on Ohio's public television stations, or a series of videos created to help parents understand an IEP or the Third Grade Reading Guarantee shared in an online platform, or 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 in Ohio.

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

Thank you again, Chairman Gardner, and members of the committee for the time here today. I welcome any questions you may have.