

Testimony from Anthony Padgett, General Manager, WOSU
On behalf of the Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications
April 29, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Anthony Padgett, and I am here representing the Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications, serving as a representative of the Ohio Educational Television Stations, and the General Manager of WOSU in Columbus. The Ohio Alliance includes 8 Ohio Public Television Stations, 15 Ohio Public Radio stations and 6 Ohio Radio Reading Services.

I am expressing my support today for the budget request submitted to you by the Broadcast Educational Media Commission and endorsed by the Alliance for Public Telecommunications. We endorse the state support for the Statehouse News Bureau, Ohio Government Telecommunications (OGT) and Public Media Content, Development, Acquisition, and Distribution and the Radio Reading Service. All of these services are included in the overall BEMC budget.

Public Media serves more than 11.8 million residents in Ohio with 1.4 million of those being children. But, beyond our broadcast it is our mission to enhance and promote public safety, education, community connections and the preservation of local history and culture for all your constituents. Especially for those at risk.

You are probably familiar with our core programming, but unique to this State, we also broadcast the Ohio Government Channel which represents your Legislative sessions and informs Ohio citizens on important issues across our State.

There is so much more to the public media mission than just what you see or hear on the surface.

So, I'd like to give you a few examples of the work we do beyond what you might expect that our state funding helps support.

Public Safety in times of disaster.

Public media stations are the backbone of the Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alerts. We play a critical role in keeping our communities safe when other networks fail, ensuring reliable communication during crises and disasters. This service has been critical in many of our communities. Seeing this impact firsthand, we continue to explore ways to expand this service and ensure that Ohio remains a national leader in this field.

Education for students, teachers and life-long learners. This is the DNA of public media.

Public Media provides free, expert-informed educational content that equips parents, teachers and caregivers to support children's learning and growth. We are a source for professional development for teachers providing continuing education that is necessary to maintain their credentials.

This year, our multi-media projects will focus on Workforce development and will provide tools for students to investigate ways to explore career paths that are important to our State.

This work is not created in a vacuum, but with experts and advisors in education across the State. Over the years we have created tools for parents and teachers focusing on many topics including SEL, STEM careers and Literacy.

Each public media station is locally managed, creating content and outreach that reflects the needs of the community.

Engaging with our citizens and partners in our local communities - is a valuable resource that public media fosters. Each of our organizations convene town halls – offer safe spaces for civic engagement and dialog - and invite our families, friends and neighbors into our stations for screenings and community centered events.

Through collaboration, public media stations work together to serve the citizens of the State. Partnering with Ohio Public Radio (OPR) Statehouse News Bureau and The Ohio Channel allows us to amplify even more Ohio voices. Furthermore, we have the added benefit of our statewide connection. A technology service provided by the BEMC that allows us to be connected via fiber, through BEMC, and makes it possible for all Ohio Citizens to have access to the Ohio Government Channel.

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 helps ensure that all citizens and schools have access to the same quality programs and services. It is a cornerstone of funding that we rely on, but also the foundation we build from each year.

One other service I'd like to highlight today is the Ohio Radio Reading Services.

2.4% of the Ohio population has some kind of visual impairment. And we are fortunate to have the Ohio Radio Reading Service to support them.

The Six Ohio Radio Reading Services reach homes without internet access and provide the service free of charge to the user through partnerships with our public broadcast stations. Dependent on volunteerism and community donations, these small, not-for-profit organizations must have State support to ensure core services continue and that we have informed and educated voters, reduce public assistance needs, and can increase opportunities for visually-impaired persons.

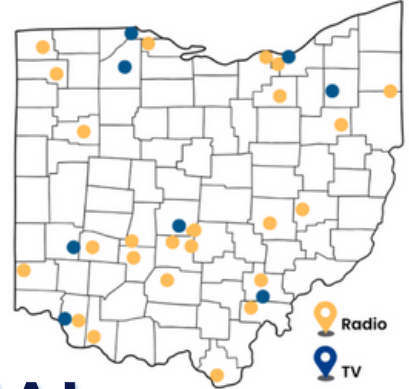
Thank you for your past and continued support and for your time today.

This concludes my testimony, and I'm happy to answer any questions following Dr. Shellenbarger's testimony.

OHIO PUBLIC MEDIA...

IS ACCESSIBLE

For more than 70 years, Ohio's **8 public TV stations**, and **15 public radio stations** bring education and entertainment to every corner of the state, reaching the hearts and minds of all **11.8 million Ohioans** including **1.4 million** young children.



IS EDUCATIONAL

Ohio youth engage with our **dynamic learning resources** in the classroom. At home, families dive into our research-based **educational programming**. And with our expert **professional development**, teachers elevate student learning.

IS CULTURAL

We bring Ohio's stories to life. Each station creates **local programming** that informs, inspires and showcases the incredible talent and **rich culture of our communities**.



IS CIVIC-MINDED

Only through Ohio Public Media stations — **The Statehouse News Bureau**, **The Ohio Channel** and **The Ohio Newsroom** deliver exclusive **public affairs programming** and **in-depth statewide reporting** that can't be found anywhere else.

IS A *Vital Resource* **FOR OHIO**

The Value of Public Media

Public media is the only nonprofit, commercial-free media service that provides trusted news, educational programming, and emergency information to all Americans — regardless of income, location, or advertiser interest.



Public media stations ensure that children in all communities have access to free high-quality, science-backed educational programming.



Public media stations serve as backbones of the Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alerts during emergencies.



Public media stations are a trusted source of fact-based news, local productions and cultural programming that reflect our communities.

Public Media is Trusted

- For more than 20 years, Americans have said they trust public media more than any other national institution. PBS KIDS is routinely rated as the most trusted, educational programming for kids, according to surveys of parents.
- In the most recent trust survey, 85 percent of Americans agree that public media stations provide an excellent value to their local community.
- Member stations are accountable to the communities they serve, producing content that reflects the community and providing fact-based news coverage.

Public Media is Valuable

- Public Media brings trusted programming and emergency information to more than 99 percent of Americans and costs only \$1.60 per person in federal funding.
- Government funding is essential seed money in our efforts to serve our communities. For every government dollar invested in public broadcasting, we generate six times that amount in private donations and corporate sponsorships.

Public Media is Essential

- More than 50 percent of children lack access to formal pre-K education, making public media's free, research-backed programming essential for school readiness (NIEER).
- Public media stations serve as backbones of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) during natural disasters, public health crises, and national emergencies.

