

**Testimony of Kathleen A. Pavelko**

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**April 22, 2009**

As Mrs. Joanne Rogers said in the video, here we are 40 years later, and funding for public television is again the subject of a public hearing. We are grateful for the opportunity and hopeful of a similar outcome.

I am honored to be here today representing all eight of Pennsylvania's public television stations that, since 1968, have been part of the Pennsylvania Public Television Network.

The eight are: WVIA/Scranton-Wilkes-Barre; WQLN/Erie; WLVT/Allentown; WHYY/Philadelphia; WITF/Harrisburg; WQED/Pittsburgh; WYBE, MiND/Philadelphia and WPSU/State College.

My objective today is to give you some essential facts and figures about the eight public media organizations that serve this Commonwealth. Our other speakers will provide personal and direct testimony on the impact that each of the stations has on the lives of Pennsylvanians, from the youngest children to our most senior citizens.

Our respectful request is for the restoration of \$7.95 million in station grants, the funds which provide direct service to Pennsylvania citizens. We understand the state's budget challenge, however, and are prepared to do our share. The budget proposal already includes a \$2.3M reduction for public television in Pennsylvania. This reduces the state's investment in public television by 18.9%, which we believe is a fair sharing of the budget burden. Each station will spend many thousands of dollars to replace the services previously provided by the PPTN state network, and that we are prepared to do.

Each of the stations is a locally owned, locally managed, non-commercial media organization, governed by non-profit boards comprised of local citizen volunteers. You will hear from three of those remarkable citizen leaders today: Andrew Sordoni, who has served on the board of WVIA; Julie Cleland, who serves on the board of Penn State Public Broadcasting, and David Haas, who is a founder and member of the board of MiND, Independence Media. They invest their time and talents in public television because they believe in its importance. In many regions, we are the *only* locally owned media organization, as the rest of the broadcast stations and newspapers in each area are part of national conglomerates.

You will also hear today from Marciarose Shestack, a noted broadcast pioneer and member of the PPTN Commission, on the distinctiveness of local public media organizations in today's media environment.

Each station is a 501(c)3 organization licensed by the Federal Communications Commission to serve "the public interest, convenience and necessity." We are therefore mission-driven, not profit-driven, and committed since our founding to the goal of lifelong learning. Whether we have been called "educational television" or "public television," we serve the public with commercial-free programs that educate, entertain and inform. More 3.3 million people watch public television *every week*.

Almost 600,000 of our viewers each week are children under 12, who watch educational, word-based, literacy-enhancing programs that parents trust more than any other source. The Governor has repeatedly said that improving public education is a top priority, and we agree: there is no better way to insure success for children than making sure they are Ready to Learn when they enter school. You'll hear

today from Ashleigh Zimmerman, a mother and early childhood educator, about how our public stations do that for Pennsylvania children.

Pennsylvania receives significant value for the funds entrusted to Pennsylvania's public stations. In the current state budget year, \$7,995,000 was distributed to the eight stations. This represents 81 cents per Pennsylvania citizen or 10% of the total television revenue for the stations overall. The state's annual investment leverages the remaining 90% of revenue for stations, which comes from individual contributions, corporate support, federal grants and earned revenue.

The stations together have operating budgets of about \$100 million annually, with more than 600 full-time equivalent employees. We are economic contributors to our communities, and we work closely with community and government agencies to support the economic vitality of our regions. You'll hear from Nancy Dischinat of the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board on one example of that contribution.

You should know that, while state funds are important to every public station, some stations are more dependent than others upon the Commonwealth's funding, ranging from 6% of television revenue at the low end to 37% of total television revenue at the high end. For every station, the loss of this funding would create significant job losses and be visible to every viewer. It would damage the services provided to children, families and teachers.

To use my own station as an example, the loss of \$900,000 in annual operating funds is the equivalent of 20 full-time positions; it represents the entirety of our annual programming fee to PBS. In the current economic crisis, WITF has already laid off valued staff members and reduced compensation, including my own. So far we have avoided cuts that would impact programs and services. If state funding disappeared, however, the impact on local and original programming would be immediate and immense. Our hard-won capacity to cover state issues, which we do on *Smart Talk*, to celebrate the history of the Commonwealth, which we do in *ExplorePAhistory.com*, and to celebrate Pennsylvania's natural beauty, which we do on *Explore PA* on television—all this would be damaged or lost.

As you will hear this morning, the need for public television has never been greater, and the contrast between our programs and others has never been stronger. So I conclude this morning with this point: Supporting public television is consistent with the Governors priorities for state funding, which he describes as "health, safety and welfare."

**On the matter of health**, public television is the *healthy* media choice for children, the only uninterrupted, commercial-free source of programs that inspire curiosity and build character.

**On the subject of safety**, public television stations have been a *public safety* asset: PPTN stations are the secure, statewide backup system for emergency communications—the EAS system for national security, natural disasters and Amber alerts.

**And on the subject of welfare**, public television's free-to-all programs are a public benefit and a contribution to our common *welfare*. We are in fact part of the common wealth of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.