



**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTOPHER GOEKEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING STATIONS OF NEW YORK
BEFORE THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON EDUCATION
JANUARY 28, 2021**

Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, Chair Mayer, Chair Benedetto, and members of this joint committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of New York's public television stations. The Association for Public Broadcasting Stations of New York represents the nine public television stations across New York State. APBS requests that the legislature support funding at the same level that was enacted in the final 2020-21 budget.

New York's public television stations are a unique private-public partnership that continues to keep its promise—to provide high-quality, trusted content that educates, inspires, and informs in ways that enrich the lives of New Yorkers. New York's nine locally-controlled nonprofit public television stations reach almost every New Yorker and uniquely serve their communities throughout the state—rural, urban, and everywhere in between. This is because public television stations were founded on a mission for universal service and community-based accountability.

When schools closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, public broadcasters started airing special "Learn at Home" programming within days. This puts educational content on TV screens across New York State--all for free and without cable. These special instructional broadcasts cover all subjects and all grade levels and are broadcast statewide for five to ten hours a day. With several TV channels in each region, young learners can continue to watch age-appropriate programming on one channel, while older students can simultaneously watch New York State teachers presenting lessons in STEM, literature, art and music, and more on PBS on another.



For example, in Albany WMHT airs PBS KIDS on channel 17.4 and our Learn at Home broadcast on channel 17.3. Every PBS station has multiple free, over-the-air digital channels with different content on each.

For students without broadband at home (20% of students in some regions), these TV classroom shows were the only way for them to receive instruction. All of this educational content is available for free with a \$10 TV antenna and is also available on cable, such that 98% of New York households are able to access their local PBS station.

For those students who were lucky enough to have broadband access and were able to join a virtual Zoom class with their teacher, PBS stations provide special digital content for teachers to use as part of their virtual classroom. Using the existing free platform PBS LearningMedia, public media stations aligned content with local curriculum and statewide standards so that students could view videos, audio clips, and more while attending their virtual classrooms. Students, teachers, and parents counted on their public media station for these essential educational programs. None of this would not have been possible without state funding for public broadcasters.

All of these special educational programming and content was produced on top of all of the familiar PBS shows like *American Experience*, *PBS Newshour*, and *Great Performances*. Our stations continued to create programming that matters to their local region and the state, whether it is our news magazine *Mountain Lakes Journal* in Plattsburgh and the Adirondacks; public affairs shows like *Metrofocus* in New York City and Long Island; Syracuse's *Connect NY* or *New York Now* in Albany; medical series *Second Opinion* from Rochester; Binghamton's series on poverty in the Southern Tier *Chasing the Dream*, and Buffalo's *Making Buffalo Home* about refugees in Western New York. We also bring New York veterans together to discuss their adjustment back to civilian life in our continuing series *Veterans Coming Home*.

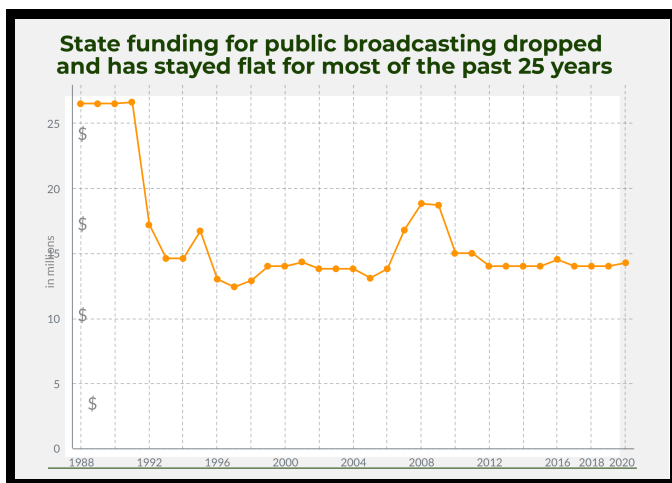
New Yorkers turned to PBS for reliable, unbiased information about the elections, the coronavirus pandemic, and now vaccines. In fact, for the 17th straight year, Americans named PBS and their local member stations as the most trusted source for news in a 2020 survey.

As mentioned earlier, *PBS LearningMedia* is a free tool for New York's teachers to use educational digital content in the classroom. With over 29,000 videos, 2,700 interactive digital tools, and 8,800 lesson plans, PBS LearningMedia makes the classroom come alive. Teachers today know that their students are tech-savvy so PBS LearningMedia makes it easy for them to

use videos, interactive resources, and more in the classroom. All of this free content lets teachers use their tablets, laptops, and digital projectors with compelling, standards-aligned content.

PBS LearningMedia is plug and play for a teacher—they can search for a lesson plan on the website, use our digital content and tools, and even allow students to access this content for free at home. PBS LearningMedia is a walled garden where children can safely view digital content away from YouTube or other sites with inappropriate or poor-quality content. All for free.

PBS LearningMedia provides content from known and trusted PBS shows like *PBS Newshour*, *Nature*, *Curious George*, *Nova*, and *Ken Burns*. We screen this content, select short video clips, create lesson plans, hand-outs, and make it easy for teachers to use them. Forty-two percent of New York’s public school teachers use PBS LearningMedia—and more sign-up every day.



We are extremely grateful for the trust you have placed in us year after year by continuing to fund our educational broadcasts and programs. This past year has been extraordinarily difficult for revenues for everyone, and our member stations are not an exception to that. As part of our private-public partnership, PBS stations raise funds from private donations, foundations, and underwriting corporate support. It is no surprise that all of these

sources have dramatically decreased in 2020, so state funding is more crucial than ever as we enter 2021 and beyond.

With flat funding, our stations can stabilize their outlook and continue to support students, teachers, and parents. Thank you for this opportunity to speak about public broadcasting.

The Association of Public Broadcasting Stations of New York represents nine public television stations across the state, WNET (NYC), WLIW (Long Island), WCNY (Syracuse), WXXI (Rochester), WMHT (Albany), WNED (Buffalo), WPBS (Watertown), WSKG (Binghamton), and Mountain Lake PBS (Plattsburgh).