

**Testimony**  
**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs**  
**and Education and Cultural Affairs Committee**  
**Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation (Maine Public)**  
**Clare E. Hannan, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer**  
**February 13, 2023**

Thank you, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and all the members of both committees; I'm Clare Hannan, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Maine Public. I appreciate the opportunity to address you today on the funding and work of the Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation, and to provide a brief overview of a few of our strategic efforts. We value our partnership with the Legislature and state government and appreciate your support.

Maine Public is the statewide public television and public radio network. We are where Mainers get the television programs of PBS and the radio service from NPR, we have also become a key resource for state and local news from Maine Public journalists, as well as for classical music on our Maine Public Classical network.

There are so many Mainers who are represented here, from the hundreds of thousands of viewers and listeners across the State of Maine, the nearly 53,400 member households who support the programming with their contributions, our 120 employees across the State, and the 20 community volunteer members Board of Trustees.

We broadcast Maine news and information and tell Maine stories. One of our distinctive services is High School Basketball Championship Weekend, where we broadcast the championship game for each of the five high school divisions for both boys and girls. It's a tradition that Mainers associate with public television, and we are proud to do it.

We're also proud to produce some competition on the academic side. In March, we will premiere Season Six of High School Quiz Show Maine, a fun game-show-style competition featuring high school teams from all over the state.

Perhaps the most important part of our partnership with state government is our role in public safety and emergency communications. On the handout, you can see a map of our transmission network for radio and television. We are the only broadcast service that covers the whole state, and we partner with the Maine Emergency Management Authority, MEMA, to give them the ability to communicate emergency information statewide. Maine Public is the primary distribution method for Emergency Alerts System messages, EAS. We are the best way that state authorities can communicate easily and simply in an emergency.

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The costs of operating and delivering signals to remote locations from Aroostook & Washington, Penobscot & Piscataquis, Somerset to Androscoggin, Oxford, and frankly, every single county in Maine are significant – about \$2.6 million out of an annual budget of just under \$16 million in FY22. We serve these rural communities as a partner like we always have – but it remains both expensive, and technically challenging to keep these 5 television and 7 radio broadcast transmitters and dozens of transmission links operational and “on the air” every day. The dollars that come from the State are, per State statute, intended to meet the costs of delivering broadcast and emergency alert services and maintaining our state network. The programming costs for TV and Radio are exclusive of State monies, and supported by our listeners, viewers, and underwriters, and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

As you can see represented by the graph in the center of your handout, there has been a gap for several years between our state appropriation and the costs we incur to maintain our network. As recently as 10 years ago, in 2012, the appropriation was just under two million, and our expense for operating and maintaining the network was also around \$2 million. In the past ten years, the appropriation declined to \$1.5 million, and in the last budget it rose to \$1.65 million. Meanwhile, our expenses have risen to over \$2.6, so the gap is now at just about \$1 million. For that reason, we respectfully request an additional \$850,000 be added to our baseline appropriation.

Finally, the handout has a note about infrastructure improvements. Our network of towers and transmitters was built in the 1960s and requires significant upgrades and replacement. We have a modernization plan that costs approximately \$27 million. In 2021, we were allocated \$10 million in ARPA funds through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan. That \$10 million is helping us with significant modernization, including replacing two main television transmitters. But that is \$10 million out of a \$27 million need, so we will continue to ask for more support during this legislative session through the bond bill process.

In summary, we remain committed to serving all the people of Maine for public safety, while connecting to them in a variety of ways. We’re focusing on a continued emphasis on Maine news, journalism, and public affairs content in more places across the State. We’re launching new digital platforms and program services to meet the needs of current and future generations of users and ages. And finally, we continue to work on building strong relationships with all of you as part of our statutory and historical connection to the State of Maine. We’re appreciative of your commitment to Maine Public as we face new technology and programming challenges, even as we set our sights on continuing to be a valuable asset for Maine and in fact, creating new ways to meet the Public Broadcasting needs of future generations of Maine citizens.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and I’d be pleased to answer any questions from the Committee members.

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