

For the:

## APRIL 22 Senate Communications & Technology

Good morning, thank you for giving us access and may our remarks please the committee.

Many of us are here today because we fear that there will be drastic reductions, even the elimination of funding for public broadcasting in our beloved commonwealth. In the minutes allotted to me I will offer my own perspective on these community treasures, our local public broadcasting stations.

Pennsylvania public broadcasting stations connect with their communities. This past year WVIA created an unprecedented and significant amount of quality, original programming including biographies, award winning documentaries and current interest programs. It has been my privilege to have an active role in some of it as enabler, benefactor and producer. This intimate association has given me appreciation and respect for the remarkable product we all get only from public broadcasting.

Our station is more than just a source for quality entertainment in information – it gives perspective and encourages both thought and debate in even-handed forums. Further our organization is truly catalysts, educator and convener. WVIA is the unifying COMMON DEMONINATOR of our region. It is true that 175,000 Pennsylvania families give their own money to local stations for programs they can get for free over the air. At WVIA I have been impressed that so many give voluntarily and there by approve and endorse what we do.

Our recent capital campaign provided the resources to build an HDTV Theater that literally transformed our programming and that has become a favored destination for our members, the public and important visitors. The state was our partner in this undertaking but a majority of the capital came from members and the business community. As a result of this partnership in investment, thousands of citizens come to our building for debates, concerts, classroom experiences and important news programs where they participate in live television.

WVIA is no longer just broadcast stations it has become an important public venue and it's cost effective. Government funding leverages other dollars: WVIA's state grant, 18% of operations, is leveraged more than 5 times, by any measure a good return. As a businessman, capitalist and skeptic I am not impressed by good intentions or best efforts. I expect results that match my own commitment. WVIA has been an exceptional steward of public & private funds. This organization has espoused the highest integrity and journalistic ethic within a modern culture that is highly professional and wholly dedicated to its stated mission.

Our commonwealth is getting more than its monies worth from its grants to our regional stations. By example: 99.6% of our citizens directly benefit by receiving public broadcasting at a cost of only \$0.81 per Pennsylvanian per year.

It is my conviction that it would be short sided and imprudent to significantly reduce grants to these community treasures. The stations actively educate teachers and students, are local partners and enablers of all those involved in public safety, health, welfare, the arts, economic development and civic engagement. They are outstanding citizens of their Pennsylvania communities and in most cases the only locally-owned electronic broadcasting media. They create and assemble inspiring programs that involve Pennsylvanians interactively in issues not addressed effectively by commercial broadcasters.

All or much of these treasures will be lost to Pennsylvanians by significant cuts in state funding and our civilization will be the worst for it.

Respectfully,

Andrew Sordoni