



New York's Public Broadcasters

**Testimony Of Christopher Goeken
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Association of Public Broadcasting Stations of New York, Inc.**

Before the

2026 Joint Legislative Hearing on State Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Proposal

January 29, 2026

Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow, Chair Mayer, Chair Benedetto, and Ranking Members

O'Mara and Ra, and members of the Legislature:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of New York's public television and public radio stations. My name is Christopher Goeken, and I am the Executive Director of the Association of Public Broadcasting Stations of New York (APBS). Our association seeks to strengthen public media in New York State, and I note that New York State has supported our public media stations for decades through §236 of the education law and before that through direct grants and support.¹

¹ §236 Ed. Law provides operational support to nine public television stations and sixteen public radio stations throughout the state.

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I am here today to discuss the elimination of funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and other federal programs that supported public media, and what those cuts mean for our public media stations in their essential local journalism and educational programming.

Public broadcasting plays a unique and irreplaceable role in New York's civic life and educational system. Public radio and public television stations are locally owned, locally governed nonprofit institutions with a statutory mission of universal service and community-based accountability. They operate in markets ranging from New York City to the North Country, from Buffalo to the Southern Tier, and they do so without paywalls, subscription fees, or advertising.

Across the state, public media provides daily local journalism, local and statewide public affairs reporting, vital information during emergencies, free educational programming, free digital teaching tools for use in schools and at home, local history documentaries, and even local high school sports coverage in some markets.

Examples include:

- **Local journalism and public affairs** on shows such as *The Brian Lehrer Show* (WNYC), *Connections with Evan Dawson* (WXXI), *Northern Light* (North Country Public Radio), *New York Now* (WMHT), and *The Roundtable* (WAMC).
- **National and international reporting** on shows like *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, *PBS NewsHour*, *FRONTLINE*, and *Amanpour & Company*—journalism that consistently ranks as the most trusted in America.

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- **Emergency Communication and Public Safety.** Public radio stations serve as trusted sources of real-time information from emergency management officials, while PBS WARN underpins FEMA's nationwide direct-to-cellular emergency alert system.
- **Free Educational Resources:** High-quality, no-cost educational content for students, families, and educators, including STEM programming such as NPR's *Science Friday* and classroom resources through PBS LearningMedia.
- **Foundational Educational Programming:** Universally accessible early-learning content through New York State produced programs such as *Sesame Street*, *Reading Rainbow*, and *Cyberchase*; initiatives like *PBS Ready to Learn*, which specifically serve low-income and disadvantaged communities; and major programming for life-long learning like Ken Burns documentaries and *Nova*.

The elimination of CPB funding created an immediate and destabilizing shock to public media stations across the state. We were forced to absorb over \$28.4 million dollars in losses within a few months. As a result, stations laid off over 125 staff, canceled and reduced production of over 40 programs, ceased or greatly reduced local educational outreach, halted equipment upgrades that ensure broadcasts function during emergencies, and suspended local journalism projects.²

Examples of the impacts of the federal cuts in New York State include:

- New York Public Radio (WNYC/Gothamist) eliminated newsroom staff and a dedicated Albany-based journalist whose reporting was carried statewide.
- WNED Buffalo Toronto Public Media reduced production of radio shows such as *Tapestry* and *The Disabilities Beat*, and halted production of educational programs *Compact History*, *Compact Civics*, *Compact Science*, and *Let's Go*.

² Please see last page for full list

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- North Country Public Radio reduced flagship journalism projects such as *Northern Light* and *North Country at Work* and deferred maintenance on equipment needed to continue broadcasting in emergency situations.
- WNET cancelled the early literacy program *Ready to Learn*, canceled a new *Mission:US* program on Puerto Rico, and froze production of *Cyberchase*, an award-winning show with online resources that teach mathematics and problem-solving skills.
- WFUV (NYC) reduced paid staff by approximately 13 percent and scaled back Bronx-focused community journalism and its student training program.
- Mountain Lake PBS (Plattsburgh) eliminated all field reporting for the only television magazine program in the Adirondacks.
- WPBS (Watertown) cancelled its weekly public affairs program.
- WCNY (Syracuse) eliminated locally produced programs focused on regional economic development and communities of color, and ended coverage of inclusive and adaptive sports.
- PBS Newshour Weekend was cancelled.
- WRVO (Oswego) reduced all local news coverage
- Across the state, stations have also reduced or eliminated teacher workshops, stopped producing curriculum-aligned teaching aides, and ended documentary projects tied to New York history and civics.

The damage from the federal cuts is not evenly distributed. Federal funding made up a significant percentage of the total budget for smaller stations like Mountain Lake PBS at 35%, WSKG at 21% (TV & radio) and North Country Public Radio at 15%.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, New York City is lucky to have two flagship stations: WNYC radio and WNET - Thirteen. Both stations have had to absorb multi-million dollar funding cuts and make significant staff cuts. And because of their

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position as national producers of shows like *Nature*, *American Masters*, *The New Yorker Radio Hour*, and *On the Media*, their reductions are felt across the country.

Last year, the legislature wisely anticipated the elimination of federal funding and allocated an additional \$4M for our public radio stations. I can say unequivocally that this funding prevented substantial damage to New York's public radio stations and their newsrooms. It prevented at least a dozen additional reporter positions from being eliminated, kept at least one public radio station on the air, and avoided the decommissioning of several broadcasting radio towers in rural regions. For example, across the North Country, three dozen "repeater" towers are needed to reach from Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence Seaway into mountain valleys and rural areas. The loss of any of these towers would have meant that local news would have disappeared for those communities, as public radio is the only local news source. That would also mean those communities would be further isolated from vital public information during emergencies.

Our stations have also turned to our members and asked for more support during this very difficult time, and I am happy to report that New Yorkers heard the challenge and stepped up. We have seen an increase in new members and an increase in support from existing members. While it hasn't come close to making up the loss of \$28.4M statewide, it has helped to soften the blow, and it's a great reminder of the success of the model of public broadcasting: a partnership in funding between the government and the public.

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However, the elimination of federal funding has fundamentally changed the equation of how we pay for public media. We have already turned to our members and the public for more support and they've answered. State funding that once stabilized and complemented federal and member support now needs to do more. Without action, the erosion of local journalism will accelerate and the damage to public broadcasting's educational programming will continue.

The federal rescissions have already cost New York communities reporters, programs, and coverage that cannot be easily rebuilt. The question before the Legislature is whether New York will allow those losses to compound or whether the State will act to protect a trusted, noncommercial source of news and educational programming.

On behalf of New York's public radio and public television stations, I urge you to support an increase of \$15M over the executive budget for public broadcasting in the final FY 2027 budget, with \$5M allocated for public radio and \$10M for public television. I urge you to recognize what is at stake and to include this increased support for public broadcasting.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to public broadcasting.

The Association of Public Broadcasting Stations of New York represents all 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) and six public radio stations WLIW-FM (Long Island), WMHT (Troy), WCNY (Syracuse), WSKG (Binghamton), WXXI (Rochester), and WBFO (Buffalo).

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New York State

Programs And Productions Canceled Or Reduced

Due To Federal Rescissions And Elimination Of Federal Funding

Station	Medium	Program / Service	Status / Impact
Mountain Lake PBS (Plattsburgh)	TV	Local specials & documentaries	Canceled
Mountain Lake PBS (Plattsburgh)	TV	Mountain Lake Journal	Reduced
NCPR / WSLU (Canton)	Radio	Northern Light	Reduced
NCPR / WSLU (Canton)	Radio	North Country at Work	Reduced
WCNY (Syracuse)	TV	Regional Economic Development show	Canceled
WCNY (Syracuse)	TV	Behind the Woman	Canceled
WCNY (Syracuse)	TV/Radio	Challenger Baseball Game of the Week	Canceled
WCNY (Syracuse)	TV/Radio	NYS Special Olympics coverage	Canceled
WCNY (Syracuse)	TV	Iroquois Confederation	Canceled
WEOS (Geneva)	Radio	Local radio service	May cease
WFUV (NYC)	Radio	Bronx community programming	Reduced
WFUV (NYC)	Radio	Student training program	Reduced
WMHT (Troy)	TV/Radio	RISE Reading Service for the Blind	Reduced
WMHT (Troy)	TV	Education services	Reduced
WNED (Buffalo)	TV	Compact History	Canceled
WNED (Buffalo)	TV	Compact Science	Canceled
WNED (Buffalo)	TV	Let's Go	Canceled
WNED (Buffalo)	TV	Ready to Learn	Canceled

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WNED (Buffalo)	TV	Compact Civics	Canceled
WNED (Buffalo)	Radio	Tapestry	Reduced
WNED (Buffalo)	Radio	The Disabilities Beat	Reduced
WNET	Digital	Mission US	Canceled
WNET	TV	Ready to Learn	Canceled
WNET	TV/Digital	Cyberchase	Canceled
WNET / THIRTEEN (NYC)	TV/Digital	Mission US	Reduced
WNYC / NYPR	Radio	Albany-based statewide reporter	Canceled
WNYC / NYPR	Radio	Classical music podcasts	Canceled
WPBS (Watertown)	TV	Artistic Horizons	Canceled
WPBS (Watertown)	TV	WPBS Weekly: Inside the Stories	Canceled
WPBS (Watertown)	TV	Digital shorts	Canceled
WPBS (Watertown)	TV	Local series	Reduced
WRVO (Oswego)	Radio	Local programs	Canceled
WRVO (Oswego)	Radio	Local news & public affairs	Reduced
WSKG (Binghamton/Vestal)	TV/Radio	Climate Change Reporter	Canceled
WSKG (Binghamton/Vestal)	TV/Radio	Youth Voices	Canceled
WSKG Radio	Radio	Classical music service	Planned elimination
WSKG Radio	Radio	Local radio news	Reduced
WXXI (Rochester)	TV	Ready to Learn	Canceled
WXXI (Rochester)	TV/Radio	News programming	Reduced
WXXI (Rochester)	TV	Education programming	Reduced
WXXI (Rochester)	TV/Radio	Music programming	Reduced