

**TESTIMONY OF PETER FRID, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC TELEVISION
REGARDING HOUSE BILL 113**

House Finance Committee, January 19, 2011

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about House Bill 113. My name is Peter Frid and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of New Hampshire Public Television. Our broadcast center is located in Durham and our transmitter sites are in every region of the state. We are wholly owned by the University System of New Hampshire and operate our broadcast network on its behalf. I am here to speak in opposition to House Bill 113, which would prohibit the university system from using state funds to support New Hampshire Public Television.

Enactment of this bill will have grave, far-reaching consequences in our ability to serve the citizens of New Hampshire. As New Hampshire's only statewide, locally owned and controlled television network, we take our charge to serve the public very seriously. Under the charter granted to us by the Federal Communications Commission, we are obligated to serve the public's interests and needs. That indeed is our mission. We work 24 hours a day through our broadcast programs, educational and community initiatives, online resources, and technological infrastructure to serve New Hampshire and the region. We reach far beyond television screens.

Simply put, at New Hampshire Public Television, everything we do is about leveraging assets to form meaningful partnerships and extend the value of the public's investment in us.

As part of the University System of New Hampshire, we embrace the key principles contained in USNH's vision statement:

- to be education-oriented,
- to be committed to excellence,
- to use resources efficiently and effectively, and
- to be a valued partner to the people and communities of our state.

Everything we do is focused on those core principles. It has been our vision for over half a century to support information and learning in partnership with the state, the public, and business and industry, and to use our resources to their fullest extent.

Some argue that it is time to reassess the role of public television in our state. They call into question why state support is necessary with so many other options available to the public. As I look across the range of media choices, I see a mix of complementary options:

- Commercial radio and television,
- Cable and satellite,
- Local community access cable, and
- Public radio and television.

Each is relevant and valuable – but none of it is free.

We are not just a television station. We are a multi-media, community-centered institution that offers online services, and maintains numerous partnerships with community, educational, state and municipal agencies working to extend the value of the public's investment.

Our website offers enriched content to the programs we distribute. We maintain one of the largest video streaming program services in the state with thousands of hours of local, regional and national programs available to anyone, any time and any place to view free of charge.

For example, our *NH Outlook* programs are online and accessed by students and individuals interested in exploring a rich selection of programs about New Hampshire politics, history and culture. Many of our award-winning local programs are in the collections of the New Hampshire Law Library, NH State Library, and other libraries and institutions. In short, we are today's digital library with plans to expand our services in the coming years.

Beyond TV...We offer educational services designed to extend the value of our on-air programming to early childhood educators, schools, teachers and parents, in every corner of the state. We do this for free or at very little cost -- because of the state's investment in us.

We partner with dozens of community and educational agencies to develop content to cover political debates, address senior citizen issues, childhood obesity, bullying, and the environment. We also promote reading, writing, science, and math literacy -- because of the state's investment in us.

As New Hampshire looks to the 21st century and its digital future, NHPTV is already there, working with state and local government agencies. We offer them access to our broadcast towers for their public safety needs at zero or at minimal cost -- because of the state's investment in us.

NHPTV's Chief Technology Officer has been part of the first true statewide collaboration to improve and extend digital connectivity around New Hampshire. This group consists of USNH institutions, the departments of Safety, Resources and Economic Development, and Transportation, the National Guard, and others.

As part of this collaboration, NHPTV is managing a 3-year project to build out the state's microwave system. This will give public safety agencies such as the Incident Planning and Operations Center instant access to our digital broadcast datastream to send urgent information to police cruisers, fire apparatus and public safety complexes in nearly every corner of the state. We are able to do this because of the state's investment in us.

Our relationships with our many partners run long and deep within this state. This is reflected in the fact that over a million individuals watched us each month in 2010 and an average of 90,000 children ages 2 -11 watched us each week. Most of our viewers can tell you a story about how they have been affected by a program they watched on New Hampshire Public Television.

Last year, thousands of volunteers showed they believe in our mission by helping with our award-winning Auction and other station activities. Over 2,200 businesses have gained valuable exposure through their support of our auction and programming.

Public television is food for the mind. We have to work to inspire young learners, to place a sharp focus on community issues, to support New Hampshire's business interests, and yes, to celebrate our great state.

New Hampshire Public Television is not driven by profit but by service. We are constantly listening to the community to see where we're uniquely qualified to meet a need. We know we have to work hard to do our part in supporting the "New Hampshire Advantage."

We recognize the severe fiscal pressure this state is under at the present time. I acknowledge that New Hampshire Public Television will have to share in addressing this shortfall – but that is a budget discussion.

The language in House Bill 113 has far-reaching impact. It will disallow NHPTV from forming meaningful and even critical partnerships with the state, regardless of the condition of our economy or state budget.

We are mindful of our charge by the trustees of the University System of New Hampshire to address educational, community and technological needs not available elsewhere. That is what we do each and every day: on the air, online and on the ground – because of the state's investment in us.

In conclusion, I highly recommend that this bill be voted inexpedient to legislate.