

**TESTIMONY BEFORE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
IN OPPOSITION TO HB 113**

**Peter A. Frid, President and CEO, New Hampshire Public Television
March 31, 2011**

My name is Peter Frid, I am the President and CEO of New Hampshire Public Television. I am here to speak in opposition to House Bill 113. It prohibits the use of state general funds to support New Hampshire Public Television. It would severely impair our ability to conduct business. This bill would have immediate, far-reaching and extremely negative consequences on our capacity to serve the citizens of the Granite State.

I have submitted more extensive comments for your review and in the interest of time will keep my remarks brief. I would also like to add that several people representing business, education, home schooling, and others would have been here at this hearing to testify but had conflicts. They will be contacting their Senators to express their concerns about HB 113. I would like to submit some of their comments.

The NHPTV Board and I acknowledge and fully understand the severe financial crisis this state faces. However, the impact of this bill goes far beyond the threat of killing Big Bird or darkening TVs tuned in to Channel 11. Enactment of this bill would have far more serious consequences.

New Hampshire Public Television, its Board of Directors and the University System of New Hampshire are strongly opposed to this bill for two key reasons.

First, HB 113 singles out NHPTV from the normal budget appropriation process. It immediately removes all of our state funding which is one-third of our budget. This is an unreasonable and punitive action. We have been part of USNH for over 50 years. Decisions about our funding should continue to be made by the USNH Board of Trustees.

The second reason we are opposed to HB 113 is purely business. The bill essentially prohibits NHPTV from partnering with state agencies, as we currently do. It would prevent us from engaging in contracts with other state agencies in support of education, programming, business, infrastructure support, and public safety services.

For example, the Department of Transportation currently leases space on our broadcast towers for radio communication. NHPTV, DRED, and the New Hampshire State Police have agreements for sharing communication towers and facilities throughout the state for the benefit of all of our citizens. Numerous public safety agencies, towns, municipalities and hospitals use NHPTV's towers to transmit information.

The language in this bill is vague and general in nature. Prohibiting use of general funds by these departments could negate our agreements. We could be forced to evict them from our sites.

HB113 would end years of the state's investment in a public resource, without acknowledging or assuming any responsibility for the impact of this sudden and drastic cut. As part of our public service mission, NHPTV has built a state-of-the-art communications network that is an integral part of New Hampshire's state and local public safety infrastructure. It was built by leveraging state funds to secure federal grants.

It allows us to offer a host of services to communities and schools throughout the state at little or no charge. NHPTV's statewide digital data stream is being implemented this year. It will be used by state and local police, firefighters and first responders to relay critical information during emergencies and other situations.

The state's investment in NHPTV has supported our partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Education. We provide a range of online services that have enhanced student learning, teacher training and provided resources to parents, educators and students. Enactment of this bill will cause many of these services to be cut.

NHPTV wishes to continue its partnerships with state agencies and they wish to continue these partnerships with us, as we work together to economically and effectively serve the citizens of New Hampshire.

Further, as New Hampshire's only non-commercial television station, we take our charge to serve the public very seriously.

Our educational and community initiatives are targeted to meet the needs and interests of citizens in towns and cities around the Granite State.

We are the only station that has dedicated on-air, online and in-person resources to serve and inform our viewers.

Enactment of House Bill 113 would have far-reaching and negative consequences on NHPTV's ability to honor our public charge: to serve the communities of New Hampshire. It would severely limit our ability to operate. It would impact Granite State citizens, of all ages, who use and rely on New Hampshire Public Television's unique programs and services, including education, technology and local content.

I urge you to vote House Bill 113 inexpedient to legislate. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be happy to answer any questions.