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August 11, 2020

Senator Cecile Bledsoe, Chair
Representative Jeff Wardlaw, Chair
Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: Remaining CARES Act Appropriation Request – Broadcast Area Expansion

Dear Co-Chairs:

The CARES Act Committee authorized \$5.18m for Arkansas PBS to expand its transmission reach in Arkansas by adding four additional towers. This was deemed as critical for the continuation of Arkansas education during the ongoing COVID crisis.

At the last meeting of the Legislative Council, we were given appropriation of \$120,000 to complete Phase 1 of our broadcast area expansion plan to provide previously unserved areas of Arkansas with much greater access to educational broadcasts and services in the event of further school closures. This phase entailed engineering studies to determine clear channels for broadcast in the affected areas, to determine the most efficient microwave paths for disseminating our signal to the proposed new transmitter locations and to determine the structural integrity and suitability of the proposed State Police towers for microwave and transmission antennas and equipment. Also, preliminary work on our license applications has been completed by our FCC attorneys in Washington, D.C. All of this is necessary to obtain the required FCC licenses to operate low power television transmitters to serve the expanded areas. All indications are that these licenses are expected to be granted in a timely manner.

Our consulting engineers have completed work to determine available clear channel signals suitable for assignment to the new transmitters. Those same engineers are also finalizing the proposed signal paths for the microwave expansion and structural engineers are being engaged to prepare the structural studies required for the towers. All of this should be complete, or very nearly complete by the next Council meeting.

In order to move ahead with the remaining phases of the project, especially the bidding of microwave and transmission equipment, the appropriation of the remaining CARES Act Steering Committee award will be required. Purchase requisitions for the necessary broadcast equipment cannot be submitted to the Office of State Procurement without sufficient

appropriation in place for obligation once sealed bidding is complete. The procurement of this equipment is the most time sensitive portion of the entire project as some of the equipment could have significant lead times for delivery.

In order to keep the Arkansas PBS broadcast area expansion project on course to meet the required CARES Act spending stipulations, we ask that the Council revisit our proposal and approve \$5,060,000 in CARES Act appropriation. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Pledger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Courtney Pledger
Executive Director