

6 January 2022

**MEMO TO:** Rep. Mary Hooper and Members of Vermont House Appropriations Committee

**RE:** FY22 Budget Adjustment Recommendations in Support of Vermont Access Network (VAN) Request

Good morning!

My name is Liz Ruffa - I live in Dorset and work in Bennington County. I am a member of Dorset's Selectboard, serve on the boards of the Vermont Foodbank and the Vermont Community Development Board and work as the Director of Institutional Advancement for Merck Forest & Farmland Center in Rupert, Vermont.

I am testifying to support Vermont Access Network's (VAN) Legislative request for FY22 Budget Adjustment of \$300,000 as well as its FY23 Request for \$600,000.

Vermont's 23 community media centers are essential communication portals for our more rural regions in the state, yet are struggling with the rapid decline of cable revenue (their primary funding source) and steady, measured increases in expenses. While these media centers are working to generate revenue from local government and philanthropic sources, the rate of cable revenue decline is fast and steady and now threatens service delivery.

This proposed Legislative bridge funding will provide much needed funds for vital coverage of municipal meetings (in person and online) and election coverage as well as a variety of programming and media/ civic education services that connect all corners of our community.

G-NAT, based in southwestern Vermont on, is a lifeline for local government, our schools and our regional community at large--now more than ever.

In addition to dozens of public meetings, programming highlights from 2021 include:

**Conference Examines Housing Crunch** - A conference held in Arlington that explored the shortage of housing in Bennington County and across Vermont. GNAT interviewed several panelists. *Regional housing shortages*

**The Smith's Mad Tom Orchard** - The East Dorset Oral History Project: Tom and Sylvia Smith describe the history and operations of Mad Tom Orchard in East Dorset. *Local agriculture*

**"Kids Create" Variety Show 02.12.21** - In this episode Fintan and Taigue visited their Uncle Mike's farm, viewers got to watch Zevan teach painting, and "Chrysanthemum" was read aloud. *Childrens programming*

**Green Mountain Academy for Lifelong Learning Lectures** - Alex Kershaw, the author of "The Liberator" shared a gripping account of men in war, based on his book, which is now a Netflix mini-series. *Coverage of local lifelong learning programming*

**The News Project: In Studio – Edward Cameron on Climate, Energy and Cop26**  
<https://qnat-tv.org/the-news-project-in-studio-edward-cameron-on-climate-and-energy/>

Edward Cameron, climate and economic development specialist, discusses the economic and societal benefits of addressing climate change.

**The News Project: In Studio – Edward Cameron On Cop26**

Edward Cameron, climate, human rights, and energy consultant, joins us to discuss COP 26, the state of the climate, and the cost of inaction.

<https://gnat-tv.org/the-news-project-in-studio-edward-cameron-on-cop26/>

*And two News Project: in studio interviews with internationally renowned climate consultant Edward Cameron, conducted by Andrew McKeever, on climate and energy.*

Links to these shows are included in the written testimony that I will submit to the Committee.

GNAT's offerings are civically minded, varied in topic with quality delivery and always community minded. Thank you for your consideration and your support of GNAT-TV and community media in Vermont.

Thank You Madame Chair and members of the Committee for your time and interest today.

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