

Good Evening, I'm Michael Abadi and I live in Randolph. I am also the board chair for ORCA Media, which serves Randolph, Montpelier, Waterbury and 10 other towns in Central Vermont. And because we cover Montpelier, we serve the whole state by capturing important happenings, such as the Governor's Covid updates, and the work of the Legislature. We in the public access community are grateful that you recognize our importance to the political and cultural life of Vermont and we urge you to support our 24 community media centers with an appropriation of \$600,000 in FY2023.

The pandemic has made abundantly clear that people must find ways to connect remotely and that community media is an essential service in these trying times. We have assisted select boards and school boards as they pivoted to virtual meetings, and then reverted back to in person or hybrid. We worked with area high schools to livestream graduations so that families and friends could participate in such crucial milestones. We have also served non profit arts organizations like Lost Nation Theater so that they may continue to find an audience for their creative works.

The need is so great that we determined that we need to hire more staff for education and outreach so that ALL may have the tools and skills to tell their stories in a virtual format. That hire has moved us into deficit territory which is daunting given how our revenue is so dependent on waning cable television viewership. But we are diversifying revenue streams with grants, partnerships and summer youth offerings. We successfully launched the Vermont Youth Documentary Lab last summer and will be shortly opening up registration for this summer.

The pandemic stalled our partnerships with libraries in Waterbury and Randolph, but we look forward to completing those initiatives. And yes we moved to Vermont College of Fine Arts in February of 2020 and we look forward to finally having an Open House to showcase our new studio. That

move also significantly lowered our rent, so please know we are trying our best to reduce our costs.

The Legislature's support will be crucial as we try to do more with less and we ask that you appropriate \$600 thousand for Fiscal Year 2023 so that community media may continue to thrive in Vermont.