

Greetings,

My name is Jess Wilson, I live in Shelburne and I am the Co-Director of the Media Factory - a non-profit community media center located in Burlington that serves Chittenden County and parts of Addison County. I'm also on the board of the Vermont Access Network, of which the Media Factory is a member.

I was unable to secure a spot to testify in support of the Vermont Access Network during the FY25 budget hearings and so instead would like to submit the following testimony.

The Vermont Access Network asks for your support with \$1 million dollars in one-time funding, while a permanent funding source is under discussion in the Legislature.

Vermont's 24 community media centers provide an essential link to democracy by allowing community members direct access to policy makers via coverage of important community meetings, candidate forums, and by sharing legislative content. Here at the Media Factory we provide video coverage, online & cable TV distribution, and archiving services, for approximately 30 municipal and school board meetings each month.

In 2023 we had more than 3000 visitors at our facility. This included school groups, educators, and community members, who took classes with us, accessed our free video and audio production gear, participated in events, or used our TV and radio facilities to make content.

We also extended support to over 50 non-profit organizations by providing free or subsidized video production services - helping to exponentially increase their impact. A recent example is our work to support Special Olympics Vermont and the Penguin Plunge. As a media partner for the event, we helped them produce a live video stream featuring plunges, as well as interviews with athletes and supporters. The livestream had more than 2,400 views and the event raised more than \$600,000 to support SOVT efforts.

We do this work in the context of increasing expenses and declining cable revenue. Cable revenue in Comcast's Burlington service territory has declined 18% since 2016 and our other source of cable revenue, Burlington Telecom, has experienced a 28% decline in the same time period.

In closing, I want to express my deep gratitude for past legislative support and ask you to please continue to support the Vermont Access Network with \$1 million in one-time funding while a permanent funding source is under discussion in the Legislature. These funds are essential to close the gap between declining cable revenues, increasing expenses, and the need to expand services to Vermonters who do not have access to cable services.

Thank you,
Jess Wilson