



*Audio Access For People Who Are
Blind or Print-Challenged*

Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee

Re: Testimony in support of HB 6439 – Appropriation for Connecticut Radio Information System

March 2, 2021

Dear Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

As an essential operation, CRIS Radio could not have operated without the support of the state, particularly as funding from our usual sources fell due to COVID-19. As CRIS adjusted to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to do what we do best – broadcast and stream 24/7 important, reliable information that is critical to our listeners who are blind or unable to read due to other disabilities.

CRIS streamed/broadcasted in English and Spanish information that might not have been available otherwise to Connecticut's most vulnerable individuals, such as:

- Details of the Governor's Stay-At-Home orders;
- How to register to vote and how to vote by absentee mail;
- Where to get a COVID-19 test; and
- How to sign up for a vaccine.

As many classrooms were replaced with remote or hybrid learning scenarios this past year, CRIS stepped up again, providing parents and teachers of special needs students with a proven low-cost literacy tool, our CRISKids for Schools program. (Attached is an independent study on how our CRISKids Schools helps students improve more than expected by listening to a CRISKids audio book while following along in the print version).

CRIS Radio's impact is measurable and long-lasting.

As a small nonprofit without the benefit of even a modest endowment, during a typical year, CRIS relies on the state to help us keep our lights on. During the pandemic, state and federal support became even more critical as fundraisers were cancelled, foundations were unable to keep up with the demands for funding, and many donors were unable to make their annual gifts to CRIS. Please know that your support was critical in helping CRIS help our state's most vulnerable residents during this very difficult year.

On behalf of those we make our service available to, our staff, and volunteers, thank you so very much for recognizing the important job CRIS Radio does.

Sincerely,

Diane Weaver Dunne

Diane Weaver Dunne
Executive Director

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