United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 21, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Subcommitteee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
SD 184
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
SH 123
United States Senate
Washingon, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

We write to urge you to increase funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Ready-to-Learn program, which support high quality children's programming such as *Sesame Street*, *Dragon Tales*, and *Clifford the Big Red Dog*.

On Wednesday, the House Appropriations Committee cut the Corporation's budget by 25 percent from $400 million to $300 million. The bill also eliminated the $23 million allocation for the Ready to Learn program, the $39 million fund to allow Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) stations to convert to digital programming, and the $50 million meant to upgrade the satellite technology that is essential to PBS' operations.

At a time when so many parents complain about the negative messages our media sends to children, it is perplexing that members of Congress would eliminate one of the only programs that provide educational content through the media. We hope that you reject this approach and instead provide a vitally needed increase in funding for these programs.

Many parents are struggling to find positive shows for their children to watch among the violent and lurid programming that dominates television. We know from the National Television Violence Study, the largest content analysis undertaken to date, that nearly 2 out of 3 television programs contain violence – and children watching television are exposed to an average of 6 violent acts per hour. In fact, violence is more prevalent in children's programming than in other programming. And the amount of television violence is on the rise.

As parents are increasingly anxious about the negative messages their children receive from the media, these television programs represent the only safe harbor for many parents. Shows like *Sesame Street* and *Dragon Tales*, which receive essential support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, have been helping children learn critical thinking and social skills for decades. These shows are a fun, engaging and a valuable part of millions of

children's daily lives. Parents feel confident exposing their children to these shows because they are safe, free of violence, and designed to stimulate children's rapidly developing brains.

We know that children spend an enormous amount of time watching television. According to research recently released by the Kaiser Family Foundation, children between the ages of 0 to 6 spend an average of two hours a day watching television or videos, and children between the ages of 8 and 18 spend 3 hours watching television. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Ready to Learn make some of the healthiest and most valuable programming available to our children. We sincerely hope that you will do all you can to strengthen these critical programs.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Byron L. Dorgan

Jay Rockefeller

Max Baucus

Mary L. Landrieu

Jim F. Kerry

Joe Lieb

Mark Pryor

Chris Dodd

Patrick Leahy

Mark Dayton

Joe Biden

Ron Wyden

Daniel K. Inouye

Ken Salazar

Barbara Boxer

Debbie Stabenow

Tim Johnson

Barbara A. Mikulski

Jack Reed

Charles Schumer

Carl Levin

Blanche L. Lincoln