

**House Finance Committee  
Sub. HB 49 Testimony  
April 27, 2017**

**Thomas Adkins, Director  
Garnet A. Wilson Public Library – Waverly, Ohio**

Good morning, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Thomas Adkins and I am the Director of the Garnet A. Wilson Public Library of Pike County in Waverly, Ohio. It is a pleasure to testify today.

My colleagues and I are here on behalf of the Ohio Library Council and Ohio's 251 public libraries. We are here to share with you the difficulty libraries have had regarding recent drops in revenue – and what further funding cuts will mean to the 8.7 million Ohio residents who rely on our services, particularly in difficult times.

In difficult economic times, people rely more heavily on their libraries for basic services, computers, and internet services including Wi-Fi. And they count on libraries to assist with resume writing, completing job applications (most of which now require an online application process), and for job searches. Libraries also supply technical support to those unfamiliar with internet and online services.

I very much respect the House's recognition of the opioid addiction in our state. But perhaps you did not know that the agencies who serve those addicted to drugs and alcohol rely on public libraries in their mission to get their clients clean. At the four libraries in Pike County, the clients of resident drug rehabilitation centers visit our facilities on a daily basis to access special collections purchased in conjunction with the Recovery Council in Pike County. These materials were chosen to provide support and

inspiration to those addicted to drugs and alcohol. We have both collections that can be checked out and materials that can be used in-house. Our libraries have also set up links to websites to help those addicted in their struggles to conquer their drug habits.

Further reductions to our state funding, through the proposed reduction of the Public Library Fund (PLF), can only result in a reduction in services. Libraries will lose vital funding that we use to update purchased materials to assist our Recovery Council professionals in dealing with the opioid addiction crisis. Libraries will lose funding to update computers, data lines, and Wi-Fi connections used by our patrons to apply for jobs, for unemployment benefits, and to develop and submit resumes to potential employers. Libraries will lose essential funding to help patrons with their research needs and assist them with questions about computers, tablets, smart phones, and internet searching. And libraries will lose funding to keep our doors open longer hours in evenings and on weekends, when working people need us the most.

Cuts to funding make it especially difficult on libraries in my area of the state, southeast Ohio. Many of these libraries do not have a local property tax levy and rely solely on the Public Library Fund from the state for their operations. In particular, four of the six library systems in Chairman Smith's district rely solely on state funding through the PLF to deliver services to Ohioans. I strongly urge you to not cut state funding to Ohio's public libraries by reducing the Public Library Fund from its current percentage of 1.7% to 1.66% of the state's General Revenue Fund (GRF). Thank you for your time.



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Ohio Library Council  
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Good morning, Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, and members of the House Finance Committee.

My name is Kim Fender and I am the Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County and Chair of the Ohio Library Council's Government Relations Committee.

I am testifying today on behalf of the Ohio Library Council, Ohio's 251 public libraries and the 8.7 million Ohio library cardholders we serve. This is not only a great honor but also a tremendous responsibility.

The Public Library Fund (PLF) or Library and Local Government Support Fund as it was known until 2008, has been a primary source of funding for Ohio's public libraries since 1985. The PLF is not a line-item appropriation like the numerous programs and state agencies before you in Sub. HB 49. The PLF is in permanent law and is a set percentage of the state GRF. It ebbs and flows each month depending on state revenues. The PLF is currently set at 1.7% of the GRF for FY 2017. In 2008, the PLF was 2.22%.

I have been a Library Director since 1999. In 2000, my library received the highest level of state funding we ever received. That year we appropriated \$80 million. In addition to our general operating fund we had funding for building maintenance and repair, construction of a replacement branch, and \$4.6 million for technology. Our circulation was 13.3 million.

By comparison, in 2017 we appropriated \$59 million. Our appropriation for technology is \$600,000 and we have no funding for new construction and minimal funding for building maintenance. Our circulation in 2016 was 21.2 million.

So, from 2000 to 2017 we saw a 59% increase in items borrowed, a 26% reduction in library funding (even though we added a local property tax) we deferred \$18 million in building repairs, reduced our hours of operation by 10%, and reduced our staffing by 20%.

At this point we can no longer meet the demand for our services with the funding we have, much less with reduced funding. Our subscription to Hoopla is fully accessed each day as early as 9:30 am. The 50 Treehouse licenses we made available April 18 are all in use and we have a waiting list of more than 100. We didn't even promote this new service – just put it on our website and have already taken it off again. Our branches need \$54 million in repairs and improvements – like handicapped accessibility. Three of our locations are completely inaccessible to individuals with mobility impairment and two others have only limited accessibility.

When libraries switched to the PLF in 1985, we understood that, as a percent of state revenue, our funding would ebb and flow with state revenue. But, when you reduce the percent of the PLF at a time when revenue is also declining, or remove a tax from the GRF and replace it with a fee outside of the GRF, libraries take a double or even triple cut.

Although several members of the General Assembly submitted amendments to keep the PLF at 1.7% the bill before you reduces it to 1.66%. We want to thank everyone who supported public libraries with these amendments.

Thank you also to Rep. Anielski who is sponsoring an additional amendment for the Omnibus to reset the PLF at 1.68% and minimize the cut. We would greatly appreciate your support of this amendment.

Ohio's public libraries are a great public service and a great value returning more than \$5.00 in economic benefit for every dollar spent.

As you have heard from my colleagues, now is not the time to make additional cuts to public libraries. During an economic downturn and in the middle of an opioid crisis, public libraries can help to be part of the solution. We urge you to invest wisely by investing in public libraries.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Joe Palmer**  
**Director of the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library**

**Sub. HB 49 Testimony**  
**House Finance Committee**  
**On behalf of Ohio Public Libraries**

**April 27, 2017**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, and Ranking Member Cera, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding Substitute HB 49 and Ohio's public libraries. My name is Joe Palmer and I am the Director of the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library. I am here to provide a small snapshot of how our library provides essential services to the community and helps Ohioans find jobs.

The Mansfield/Richland County Public library, like all Ohio Public Libraries, tailors its services based upon what the community needs. The Library provides basic local information through First Call 211, a call center that also provides walk in services five days per week. In 2016 our call center referred 496 callers to temporary employment agencies, Ohio Means Jobs, Rehabilitation Services of North Central Ohio, and the Industrial Readiness Program at North Central State College. Our staff regularly attends the Job and Family Services Workforce Development Partnership meetings to stay updated about services in Richland County to help people in training for jobs and job searches.

Other departments and branches of the Library directly work with library customers to apply for jobs. The Library promotes the "Book a Librarian" program to help people with skills they need for jobs, developing a resume, and completing an actual application online. This service is available at all of our nine locations. In 2016 the Library offered 55 classes related to employment and computer skills. In addition to classes, there

were 412 one-on-one sessions to help people with needs or specific applications for positions. In 2017 the Library has already offered 11 classes and 148 one-on-one sessions.

In addition to the technical skills I have described, the Library offers classes on how individuals should conduct themselves in interviews and how to answer interview questions in a positive manner. In the past few years, we have worked with existing employers to educate staff on the expectations of employers. In other areas, the Library staff has specifically provided classes to the Mansfield Fire Department on Microsoft Office software. In addition, Library staff has trained members of the National Air Guard at their base on computer and office skills. We are trying to expand these services and go out to train existing employees of small companies on these basic skills. Temp2Hire, a local company that helps supply temporary employment to companies, has started a partnership with the Library. They send perspective employees to the Library for computer office skills training. These individuals do not have the basic skills to be employed. After training they are put in a queue for perspective employment.

Finally, Library staff attends the local business fair to help spread the word that the Library is available to help train company employees. We want to offer these classes outside of our walls to available sites for employers throughout the county. The Library accepts walk in requests for time with a librarian. This year we have already had 99 walk-in customers requesting individual services.

In conclusion, I thank you for the time to tell you about our services. People depend on the Library. It is time to maintain public library funding because of the diverse services we deliver. People come to us because we are neutral, we do not judge and there is no stigma.

Thank you.