

May 9, 2019

Libraries Push For More Funding After House Budget Changes

Public libraries on Thursday urged senators to restore funding to pre-recession levels – hours before the House passed a budget that would cut \$1.8 million from the Public Library Fund.

The House-passed budget ([HB 166](#)) includes an array of tax changes expected to result in a net revenue loss for the state of about \$108 million in both fiscal years, according to a Legislative Service Commission analysis. (*See separate story*)

The Ohio Library Council and its allies had previously told House lawmakers [Gov. Mike DeWine](#)'s proposed budget made some progress in funding. That was before they added the tax language, which LSC says would trim PLF funding by 1.66% or about \$1.8 million. Public libraries receive about 48% of their funding from the PLF under the state's revenue sharing system. ([Comp Doc](#))

"We're still going through some of the tax provisions because they're pretty extensive," Michelle Francis, the council's director of government and legal services, told members of the Senate Higher Education Committee Thursday during a preliminary budget hearing.

One thing is certain, however. When the state collects less income tax, fewer dollars flow to libraries and local governments.

Ms. Francis urged senators to prioritize public library funding as they begin their work on the spending plan. The council and its allies had previously made the same request of House members, arguing that new funding was needed to support upcoming 2020 Census efforts. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, April 11, 2019](#))

The House omnibus budget maintains the requirement that 1.68% of total General Revenue Fund tax revenue be placed in the fund in both fiscal years. That was about \$384 million to the state's 251 public library systems in Fiscal Year 2018 – down more than \$113 million or 23% from FY 2001.

"There are still several unknowns...that could impact the state's GRF tax base and reduce the Public Library Fund," Ms. Francis said of the House budget process.

"We are urging members of the Ohio Senate to make public libraries a priority in this budget, to restore the PLF to our 2008 levels of funding and to hold us harmless from any additional unintended reductions that may come in state funding," she added.

Michael Penrod, director of the Wood County Public Library, testified that his library received more than \$1.6 million from the PLF in 2008. Ten years later, the library received \$1.48 million.

"The 2018 distribution was still 9.3% less than that of 10 years ago and without accounting for inflation," he said. "Our library's 2008 distribution adjusted for inflation would be \$1,933,225. I join with all of Ohio's public libraries in requesting that you restore the Public Library Fund.

Ms. Francis also applauded [Gov. Mike DeWine](#)'s April executive order to create a Census 2020 Complete Count Commission to develop recommendations and assist in administration of the census. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, April 15, 2019](#))

Libraries have said funding restoration is critical to assist in census efforts since libraries provide computer and wi-fi access that is expected to be more important than ever for the upcoming count.