



**Senate Higher Education Committee  
House Bill 166 Testimony  
May 9, 2019**

Good morning, Chair Kunze, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill (HB) 166 and Ohio's public libraries.

My name is Michelle Francis and I am the Director of Government and Legal Services for the Ohio Library Council. The Ohio Library Council is the statewide association representing Ohio's 251 public library systems (rural, urban and suburban) and the 8.4 million library cardholders they serve.

We are here to share our thoughts on certain provisions in the budget proposal related to the Public Library Fund (PLF) and we hope to give you a glimpse of the wide array of services provided to Ohioans everyday through public libraries.

**Public Library Fund**

The Public Library Fund is not a line-item appropriation like the numerous programs and state agencies before you in HB 166. It is in permanent law and is a set percentage of the state's monthly tax receipts that go into the General Revenue Fund (GRF). It ebbs and flows each month depending on state revenues and is currently set in temporary law at 1.68% of the GRF for FY 2019.

The current version of HB 166 would maintain our state funding at the 1.68% rate. Under the Governor's proposal, OBM is estimating the PLF will grow by 5.1% in FY20 and 1.8% in FY21. However, these estimates are based on natural growth in Ohio's economy and no additional policy changes impacting the GRF. It is also important to note that funding for both the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN) and the Library for the Blind are deducted from the PLF – these two important programs together account for about \$5 million each year.

State funding through the PLF is critically important because it remains a primary source of revenue for public libraries. Statewide, more than 48% of the total funding for Ohio's public libraries comes from the state through the PLF. In addition, 20% of Ohio's public library systems (50 of 251) do not have a local property tax levy and rely solely on their state funding as their main source of revenue for day-to-day operations.

Furthermore, state funding for Ohio's public libraries has not increased with inflation or fully recovered from the recession. Since FY 2001, our state funding has been cut by more than \$113 million, from \$497 million to \$384 million in FY 2018 – a 23% reduction in funding. (See Attachment A).

We would like to formally thank Gov. Mike DeWine for highlighting the work and importance of Ohio's public libraries in his first state budget proposal. Investing in libraries is critical as the usage and demand for our services is growing and broadening – especially in the areas of early childhood education, broadband connectivity and workforce development. Making public libraries a priority in this budget and maintaining the PLF at 1.68% is a step in the right direction. However, there are still several unknowns in the budget process between now and June 30 that could impact the state's GRF base and ultimately reduce the PLF. We are continuing to urge the Ohio Senate to restore the PLF to our 2008 levels of funding.

**State funding is not only essential for libraries, but for the communities they serve.**

Libraries today provide a wide range of services to Ohio's citizens based on the needs of each individual community. In your local communities, public libraries serve as a critical resource by providing connectivity to the Internet and computers for personal, employment and student use. They provide wraparound services through afterschool homework help centers and feed children during the summer through the Summer Food Service Program. When schools and OhioMeansJobs centers are closed, Ohio's public libraries are open. Ohioans utilize their local libraries for job search assistance, online training and to start small businesses. Libraries will always have books on the shelves, but services in today's public libraries go far beyond books. These are just a few examples of the services provided to Ohioans through local libraries every day and provide an extremely small snapshot. (See Attachment B).

There are a few of these key areas I will touch on briefly that directly align with Gov. DeWine's priorities related to early childhood education, workforce development and connectivity.

**Early Childhood Education/Wraparound Services**

We know that only 40% of Ohio's kindergartners come to the classroom ready to learn and only 39% of Ohio's 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored "proficient" on a national reading test. Education is at the heart of public library services and we are here to help – every library in the state provides early childhood education and literacy programs. Whether it is Storytime, Ready to Read and Ready for Kindergarten programs or wraparound services like Afterschool Programs, Homework Help Centers and Summer Food Service Programs – Ohio's public libraries provide educational opportunities based on the needs of their local community.

**Workforce Development**

We know that only 43% of Ohio's adult workforce has a postsecondary degree or credential and that the workforce needs of the state are changing. In 2018, Ohio's public libraries were able to leverage our state funding to do a first-of-its-kind in the nation agreement between LinkedIn and a statewide system of public libraries. OPLIN signed a 3-year contract that enables any Ohioan with a public library card to access more than 7,500 online courses and 250,000 video tutorials. Individuals can access these courses from any location, as long as they have an internet connection and their library card. They can be in the library or at their kitchen table. In the single month of April 2019 alone, almost 84,000 Ohioans utilized this online educational platform through their local library. Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning can be an essential tool for upskilling and reskilling as the landscape for Ohio's workforce needs continues to change.

### **Connectivity/2020 Census**

Another area that has garnered much attention is the 2020 Census. Next year's census will be very different from 10 years ago when individuals went door-to-door with clipboards. The 2020 Census will be conducted primarily online for the first time. As we prepare for this extremely important nationwide count, we know that a significant number of Ohioans still lack access to this basic utility. In 2017, Ohioans utilized public library computers more than 15 million times and our Wi-Fi more than 19.5 million times. In fact, 83 of our library systems currently loan Wi-Fi hotspots. We know that the digital divide and the need for access to broadband connectivity is real – we have not only the anecdotal stories to prove it, but the statistical data to support it. Children and seniors are some of the most high-risk populations for being undercounted and billions of dollars in federal funding is on the line. We need to ensure all Ohioans are counted – including those without access to the internet. Public libraries can and will serve a critical role as primary points of service for Ohioans who need help accessing the online census – but the libraries themselves will have technology and infrastructure needs to meet that additional demand.

Many libraries are already feeling the strain on their technology and facilities. While we are extremely grateful to Andrew Carnegie and his generous contributions to libraries in the early 1900s – the original Carnegie Library buildings were meant for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, not the 21<sup>st</sup> century technology needs of today or the 71 million in-person visits we have each year. In addition, we have library facilities that are not ADA compliant and are literally crumbling. Unlike school districts and other local governments, public libraries do not receive state funding for facilities/buildings through the Capital Appropriations Bill. Our only options for building repairs or new facilities is to utilize operating funds, pass a bond levy, or borrow an extremely limited amounts of funds against our state funding.

In HB 166, Ohio's public libraries are simply looking for revenue stability in an effort to respond to the needs of Ohio's citizens as the demand for services is continuing to increase. Keeping up with the growing demand for services is only possible with adequate funding.

### **Return on Investment**

Based on state and national data, we know that our libraries are extremely popular and in high-demand with the highest use per capita in the nation. We have the highest percentage of registered borrowers, highest number of visits, and highest circulation. From that same data we also know that we are a wise investment with nearly \$2.7 billion in direct economic value to the state. For every \$1 spent by libraries, \$5 in economic value is returned to Ohio residents. The ROI makes it abundantly clear that Ohio's investment in public libraries is both cost effective and of high value to Ohioans.

Libraries are open to all and a resource that Ohio's citizens increasingly turn to for vital services. Our success is dependent on the strong partnership between the State and the local library systems.

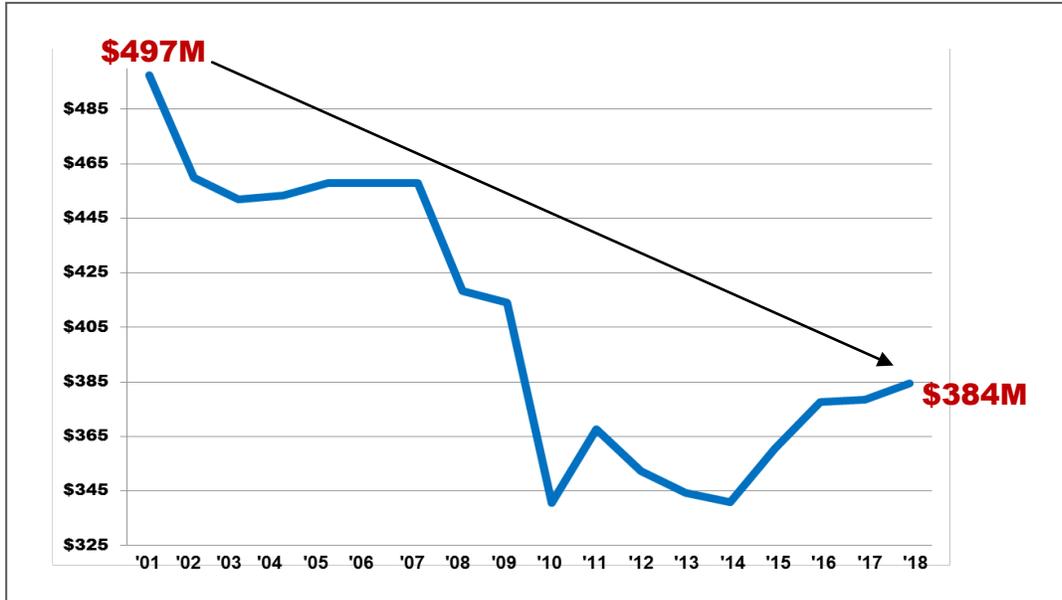
### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, state funding for Ohio's public libraries through the Public Library Fund is essential to delivering services at the local level. 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 in state funding.

The Ohio Library Council and Ohio's public libraries look forward to working with you over the next 6-8 weeks as you work your way through the budget process.

## Attachment A

### Ohio's Public Library Fund



### Fiscal Year Public Library Fund (PLF) Distributions in Millions

Fiscal Year	PLF Percentage of GRF Taxes	PLF Distributions
2008	2.22%	\$418.2
2009	2.22%	\$414.2
2010	1.97%	\$340.6
2011	1.97%	\$367.6
2012	Freeze with 95%	\$352.2
2013	Freeze with 95%	\$344.3
2014	1.66%	\$341.0
2015	1.66%	\$360.5
2016	1.7%	\$377.6
2017	1.7%	\$378.5
2018	1.68%	\$384.6

## **Attachment B**

Public libraries offer Ohioans a wide variety of programs, services, and materials based on the needs of their local community, including, but not limited to:

### *Examples of Lending*

Personal Wi-Fi Devices  
Laptops, Tablets & iPads  
Musical Instruments  
Digital Materials (eBooks, eAudiobooks, etc.)  
Artwork  
Bicycles  
Auto Code Readers  
Tools (Air Quality Monitors/Energy Check)  
Toys (Including Adaptive Toys)  
Physical Books, Music, Movies  
Kitchen Equipment  
Memory Kits  
Early Learning Kits  
Telescopes  
Board Games

### *Examples of Services*

Wi-Fi  
3-D Printers  
Homework Help Centers  
MakerSpaces  
eGovernment Assistance  
Income Tax Assistance/Tax Form Booklets  
Job Search Assistance  
Resume Assistance  
Storytime  
Summer Food Service Program Feeding Sites  
Musical & Theatrical Performances  
Passport Services  
Summer Reading Programs  
Early Literacy Programs (Ready to Read)  
Early Childhood Programs (Ready for Kindergarten)  
Educational/Computer/Technology Programs/Classes  
GED/ACT/SAT Test Preparation Programs  
Meeting Room Space  
Polling Locations & Training  
Computers  
Online Educational Courses  
Yoga  
Cooking Classes



## WOOD COUNTY DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Good morning, Chair Kunze, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding House Bill (HB) 166 and Ohio's public libraries.

My name is Michael Penrod and I am the director of the Wood County District Public Library. I am also a member of the Ohio Library Council's Government Relations Committee. I am here with you today to share some specific examples of how our local library and other public libraries across Ohio are serving Ohioans.

Our library serves a population of just over 60,000 Ohioans from the busy college town of Bowling Green, to the suburbs of eastern Toledo, to very rural agricultural areas in the southern end of Wood County. In 2018, we circulated 744,134 digital and physical items to the public (an increase of 25% since 2008). Also in 2018, our computers were used 28,172 times and our Wi-Fi was used 66,312 times.

I would like to share three specific examples of how our library is serving the local community and Ohio's taxpayers.

As Michelle mentioned, we know that over half of our children are entering kindergarten not ready to learn. In mid-2017, we launched our 1,000 Books before Kindergarten initiative to encourage parents and caregivers to read early and often to their youngest children. To date, 978 children have enrolled. The youngest enrollee was 4 days old. When children sign up, they receive a new book to keep along with early literacy information for their parents. As the family reads more books, the child receives other small incentives. At 500 books, the child gets to choose a library book and have their name inscribed on a nameplate. At 1,000 books, the child is crowned a "Royal Reader" and becomes "Facebook famous" in a post celebrating the child's achievement. To date, over 44 children have completed the reading challenge and we have noticed a 50% increase in usage of our picture book collection. In June, we will hold our second graduation celebration emceed by award-winning picture book author and illustrator Jon Agee. Funding for books, incentives, and author visits is provided by our Foundation and an estate gift.

The library is also focused on workforce development. We are currently promoting In Demand Jobs Week through displays of library materials, on our webpage, and through social media posts. In addition, we are promoting the new statewide Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning service provided by the Ohio Public Library Information Network.

The Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning Online Courses have fundamentally changed how our library can serve the learning needs of our community. No longer are patrons limited to just the books on the shelves or staff expertise, now patrons have access to an entire suite of quality learning content that is available 24/7. Since last fall, we have been working to inform others in our community about this important new service. In addition to speaking at civic organizations and offering public programs, we have held training sessions with Wood County's Human Resources staff, another with Wood County's team of Department Heads, at a OneStop Partners meeting at the local Job and Family Services office, and with our Chamber of Commerce's Lunch & Learn Workshop Series. In April alone, we had 230 users view 1,879 training videos.

Additionally, the Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning service has greatly expanded our ability to offer quality training to staff. This year, every employee is taking at least three courses because an informed staff provides better service. Courses taken internally include: Publisher, Google Drive, Setting Team and Employee Goals, Coaching Skills for Leaders and Managers, Excel Charts and Graphs, Photography 101, 3D printing in the Classroom, Enhancing Your Productivity, Learning Speed Reading, Navigating Awkward Situations at Work, Public Speaking Foundations, and Building Accountability into Your Corporate Culture.

Finally, I would like tell you about a unique partnership at our Walbridge Library in northeast Wood County. In 2017, the Northwestern Water & Sewer District needed to add a WaterShed filling station in the area, just as we were renovating our Walbridge Library. Our new agreement has resulted in the installation of a WaterShed vending unit within the building's footprint. Local residents can return books 24/7, and a few feet to the right, they can purchase clean, safe water 24/7 for their family. This partnership resulted in a 50% reduction in the Water District's construction costs as well as lower operating costs. Meanwhile, the library receives rental income and free water/sewer service for the facility. This is not only a great example of a shared service and local partnership, but a program that is in direct response to the needs of that local community – that's what libraries do.

In conclusion, I want to assure you that Ohio's public libraries are strong and ready to serve the needs of Ohioans in many different ways. Much of this strength comes from the long-standing partnership Ohio's public libraries have had with the State of Ohio through the Public Library Fund (PLF).

In 2008, our library received \$1,637,396 from the PLF. In 2018, the library received \$1,485,544. The 2018 distribution was still 9.3% less than that of 10 years ago, and without accounting for inflation. 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.

Thank you for your time. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.