

Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
House Bill 166 Testimony  
May 22, 2019

Good morning, Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Nickel Bushong and I am here to testify on House Bill (HB) 166, the biennial budget bill for FY20-21 and public libraries. With me today are my husband, Rev. Bryan Bushong, and daughters Ruby and Vivian.

We live in Perry County and the Perry County District Library is our local library system.

I had to pry Ruby's nose out of a book to get her here this morning. You see, my kids love books. They have both graduated from the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program sponsored by our local library. I was initially drawn in by the research – that being regularly read to at home during the preschool years has been shown to be a predictor of later academic success. My kids were drawn in by the prizes – our local library presented them with simple but meaningful prizes for each 100 books completed, and were celebrated at a graduation ceremony upon completion of all 1,000. As I reported to Mrs. Fran DeWine during her recent visit to Perry County, and as I am proud to report to you now, this program is one of the efforts paying large dividends in my children's education. Ruby, at age 8 and going into 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, is reading at a 5-6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. Vivian, at age 4 and going into her second year of preschool, is already reading at around a kindergarten reading level.

In our family, education begins at our local library. My kids have both visited the library with me starting when they were tiny infants, trying to chew on simple board books (their favorites are by Sandra Boynton, in case you were wondering). We've explored picture books, at first following my "reading finger" across the text, and then slowly starting to use their own finger as they painstakingly sounded out words and found important details hidden by illustrators. But, the library is so much more than books! We've checked out DVD's that teach the basics of sign language and ballet. We've used the library's digital resources to borrow e-books and audio books while we were vacationing. We've downloaded free MP3 music to enjoy. My girls love to use the A.W.E. Stations at every library visit – these are computers loaded with a variety of educational games and interactive reading activities. We've used "Playaways" - small digital devices containing videos or audio books – to keep busy during meetings at our church. My children love Miss Dawn and the Storytime program, where they listen to books, listen to poems, and make a craft to remember the day. We have attended programs at our local library where my children had opportunities to touch both a shark and a penguin, and to ask their burning questions to the zookeepers who care for those animals. I am constantly on the lookout for the next engaging resource to draw my children into a love for learning. And because of our local library, I have access to those resources.

Looking back at all of the books, DVDs, magazines, digital resources, playaways, and special programming, as well as all of the other resources I've mentioned, I would estimate that we've used close to \$10,000 of library resources in the last year. These are resources that I could never afford to purchase for my family, and these are resources that we share with our community. I am certainly not the only parent that relies on the local library resources as well as the all-important and precious librarians that help us to navigate them all.

It is not only my children who benefit from our local library. I have also relied heavily on library resources for everything from parenting guidance, to learning sewing and gardening skills, to researching health issues, to cookbooks to find healthy and delicious recipes for my family. I have borrowed literature that has grown my own mind, that has sparked deep conversations with friends, as well as memoirs that have affected my humanity and my spirituality. You see, in our family education doesn't just start at the local library – it is also where it continues and thrives throughout our lifetimes. And our family is not the only one to believe and live this way.

I have used library resources to not only enrich my own family, but also our community. When I have volunteered at the local elementary school's summer reading program, I'm sure that you can all guess by now where I go to borrow armfuls of exciting and engaging books to share with elementary school students. You know where I council folks to go for internet access for job and housing searches. You know where I have suggested a lonely senior citizen to go to get engaged with a book club.

The public library system is a vital part of our lives. The first public library in the world was founded in America; free access to information regardless of income or status is an American ideal, and the library is where this freedom is kept alive. When libraries lose funding, our families lose. It means fewer resources for me to supplement my children's educations. It means loss of access to tools that I've used to manage chronic health problems. It means limited hours for working families to visit and make use of resources that public funds have already purchased. It means loss of bookmobile stops for rural communities like mine, where transportation costs are cost-prohibitive for so many of my neighbors, and where there is an utter lack of access to broadband internet service. The expertise and guidance of a librarian cannot be replaced by a Google search. This funding is critical.

In our community in Perry County, the library is an important and valued resource. Along with public schools and public universities, our public library system is one of the profoundly great things about our country. They use financial resources in a shrewd way, yet provide an explosive return on investment. I have deep concerns about seeing this powerful institution financially hamstrung. Please invest in families and communities all over our state. It is imperative to restore the state funding for Ohio's public libraries and set the Public Library Fund at 1.7%.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



# Akron-Summit County Public Library

60 S. High Street, Akron, Ohio 44326 330-643-9000

Pamela Hickson-Stevenson, Director

Senate Finance Committee  
House Bill 166 Testimony  
May 22, 2019

Good morning, Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill (HB) 166, the biennial budget bill for FY20-21.

My name is Pam Hickson-Stevenson. I serve as the director of the Akron-Summit County Public Library and am a member of the Ohio Library Council's Government Relations Committee. I'm honored to be here today to discuss Ohio's public libraries and the vital role we play in our local communities.

The Akron-Summit County Public Library serves a population of more than 375,000 Ohioans with 19 locations, two bookmobiles, a lobby-stop box truck, and a books-by-mail service. In 2018, we circulated nearly 4.6 million items in digital and physical formats. The public visited us approximately 2.2 million times, used our computers and Wi-Fi 1.4 million times and used our mobile app 4.3 million times. Our dedicated and talented librarians provided more than 8,500 programs, which enjoyed a total attendance of more than 400,000. None of this would have been possible without our funding through the Public Library Fund, a demonstration of the commitment that the state of Ohio has made to its citizens.

I would like to share a few examples of how our library is serving our community and Ohio's taxpayers.

**We are involved in a county-wide effort to distribute drug deactivation pouches that play an important role in fighting the opioid epidemic.** Because we are a new member of the Summit County Community Partnership distribution network for Deterra pouches, we provide a convenient and friendly location for people to obtain a safe and responsible way to dispose of unneeded medication, with an emphasis on unused opiates. The pouches require only water to render medications safe for landfills. Since August 31, 2016, approximately 65,000 pouches have been distributed through the network. We are very pleased to be part of the battle against the opioid epidemic.

**We provide opportunities for youth and adults to gain technology skills.** Students enjoy STEM and STEAM learning programs on topics such as Ozobots and algorithms, that our youth librarians plan. We're especially proud of being part of the Girls Who Code national

network of clubs. Teenage girls who participate in these free after-school programs learn concepts that form the basis for all programming languages. This initiative is designed to teach girls, in a fun and friendly environment, the skills needed for a career in computing, where currently fewer than 1 in 5 computer science graduates are women. We also offer a regular schedule of classes led by Library technology trainers who teach topics ranging from basic computer skills to Microsoft Office products to library apps.

Our TechZone@Main has been helping the community since June 2016 through a variety of services and equipment. The TechZone is the Library's makerspace, a place for making, learning, exploring, and sharing. We offer two recording studios, a green screen room, design computers, a laser engraver, a vinyl printer/cutter, a media transfer station, and more. Hip-hop musician Floco Torres produced most of his latest album in our studios. Microbusiness owners, non-profit staff, entrepreneurs, artists, hobbyists, and families have all used the TechZone and have spread the news about this wonderful community resource.

**We are anchor members of Summit County's 2020 Census Complete Count Committee.**

Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and City of Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan formed the Committee in October 2018. I serve on the Committee along with representatives from non-profits, educational institutions, and local government. The Library has already been playing an important role by offering space for training and by promoting employment opportunities with the U.S. Census Bureau. We will continue our support of a complete count by providing access to internet-accessible computers and Wi-Fi as the U.S. Census Bureau offers an online option for the first time and encourages online responses as the primary way to participate. Additionally, we will be involved in promotion, awareness, and outreach so that everyone is counted.

**The Akron-Summit County Public Library is a critically important organizational member of the community.** And I believe the same is true for public libraries throughout our wonderful state. While we certainly still provide traditional services and programs, Ohio's public libraries have evolved and responded to a variety of community needs and interests. Funding from the State of Ohio through the Public Library Fund is key to our ability to deliver those needed and wanted services. We cannot provide these services without state funding.

Our state funding through the Public Library Fund has been cut by 23% since 2001. This has resulted in a reduction in services to the local community, including reduced hours that haven't been completely restored, abbreviated hours at our newest branch, and deferred and delayed much-needed maintenance and repair on buildings. We urge you to restore the Public Library Fund to 1.7% in your substitute bill.

Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration.



LICKING  
COUNTY  
LIBRARY

Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
House Bill 166 Testimony  
May 22, 2019

Good morning, Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill (HB) 166, the biennial budget bill for FY20-21.

My name is Babette Wofter and I am the director of the Licking County Library. I am here today to share a few examples of how my library and other public libraries across Ohio are serving our 8.4 million library cardholders.

As an example, my library serves a county population of just over 121,000 Ohioans. In 2018, we circulated over 1.4 million digital and physical items to the library's patrons. Our computers were utilized over 65,000 times and our Wi-Fi was used nearly 37,000 times.

It is an honor to be here today to share a few examples of how our library is serving our community and the important role state funding plays in delivering those services.

When I started working in a public library over 30 years ago, we were helping children find books for a book report using the card catalog, using a microfiche reader to create our book orders and the most innovative items we circulated were LP records and 16mm films. The library was a very quiet and reserved place.

TODAY, it is bustling with activity and joyful noise. It is a community hub, where folks still come together to learn but they do so in a variety of ways. Babies and toddlers are learning sign language during story time. Children, struggling to read out loud are comforted and excel when given the opportunity to read to a therapy dog in the library. We have free after-school snacks for kids in partnership with our local food pantry. We serve over 60 free lunches a day in the summer to our youth. You can check out musical instruments, have your taxes prepared for free, check out a sewing machine or even find the old card catalog has been repurposed. It now holds a variety of seed packets that you can simply take home, plant and grow your own vegetables. We go out of our buildings and bring the library to you. Storytime is hosted in the local coffee shop. The bookmobile is on site and issuing library cards during opening day at the baseball fields. We sit with local veterans, hear their stories and compile them into a database, honoring them for their service and creating a very special legacy project. Technology trainers are on hand to teach basic computer classes such as how to set-up an email account and how to "Google".

As for the joyful noise, a few years ago, we started circulating musical instruments, first guitars and then ukuleles. A group of senior citizens formed a ukulele club and practice together every Tuesday at our downtown location. I can hear them singing and playing in the meeting room just down the hall

from my office. I have heard everything from *Beautiful Dreamer* to *God Bless America*. It is definitely a joyful noise.

To highlight just a few other examples, I would like to share with you three successful programs/services at our library that focus on Technology, Small Business Assistance and Literacy.

### **A Technology Based Initiative: Circulating Mobile Wi-Fi Hot Spots.**

To better serve our community, especially those that do not have access to the Internet or are limited by strict data plans, we began lending mobile hot spots last fall. This small device lets you take the Internet with you anywhere you go. If you don't have access at home or want to take it on vacation, you can check it out for free with your library card for 28 days and have unlimited access.

We selected the service provider that had the broadest coverage in our area and purchased 24 kits. Each kit cost the library \$150 and includes the device, cord, and packaging. The library pays a monthly service fee of \$10 for each device.

### **Small Business Assistance: Farmers Markets and Social Media Training**

Just over a year ago, we were approached by a representative from our local SCORE chapter. SCORE is a non-profit that provides free mentoring services to established and prospective business owners. They often use our small meeting rooms to meet with their clients. The Canal Market District, our local farmers market, had a group of vendors who wanted to learn more about how Facebook could enhance the marketing of their business and draw more customers. Our Technology Trainer was happy to oblige and presented a workshop on Facebook using our laptop lab. The following is an excerpt from the letter we received from the secretary of the East Central Ohio SCORE Chapter: 'The venue, equipment and professional guidance could not have been better. We are fortunate to have you and the library available to help educate and enlighten members of our community.'

### **Literacy: Summer Reading Programs, a Public Library Tradition**

The third example I would like to share is a tradition in public libraries, one that enhances literacy and even more importantly helps our fellow educators by diminishing the "Summer Slide". The annual Summer Reading Program is a way for all students to stay engaged and learning throughout the summer. Reading is celebrated, incentives are available, special performers and activities of all kinds are available for free at your local public library. This summer's theme "A Universe of Stories" not only celebrates reading but will have a focus on space and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the moon landing. By keeping children actively learning during the coming months, educators will not have to back track so much when the kids come back this fall. Children are less likely to suffer the "summer slide" when they participate in the summer reading program at their local public library.

### **Conclusion**

The mission of our library is to serve our community of lifelong learners. We do this through a variety of educational experiences that touch the lives of our residents from age 0 to 101. Public Libraries have evolved from a quiet, reserved institution of learning to a bustling community hub of educational activity and joyful noise.

Ohio's Libraries are known as some of the best in the nation. Yet it is difficult to compare other state's libraries to our own based on a different organizational structure. In many other states, you must be a local taxpayer or pay a fee for service to use the library. These libraries are funded locally through county or city government. In Ohio, libraries are separate political subdivisions with separate boards

and separate budgets. Because we are separate and because of our state funding, Ohioans can go anywhere in the state and utilize public library service for free.

Our state funding through the Public Library Fund (PLF) makes up approximately 55% of our library's revenue. Without this support, the library would not even resemble the robust community centerpiece that it is today. In 2018, PLF dollars made up less than one percent of the state's total expenditures. The return on your investment is approximately \$5 for every \$1 spent. I encourage you to restore state funding for Ohio's public libraries and set the PLF at 1.7% of the GRF in your version of the budget bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



**Senate Finance Committee  
House Bill 166 Testimony  
May 22, 2019**

Good morning, Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance 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 for FY20-21. Under the Governor's proposal, OBM was estimating the PLF will grow by 5.1% in FY20 and 1.8% in FY21. However, these estimates were based on natural growth in Ohio's economy and no additional policy changes impacting the GRF. Am. Sub. HB 166 as passed by the House includes significant tax reform changes that will both increase and decrease 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 following the House's changes that could impact the state's GRF base and ultimately reduce the PLF. We are asking the Ohio Senate to restore the PLF to 1.7% for FY20-21.

**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 the 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 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.

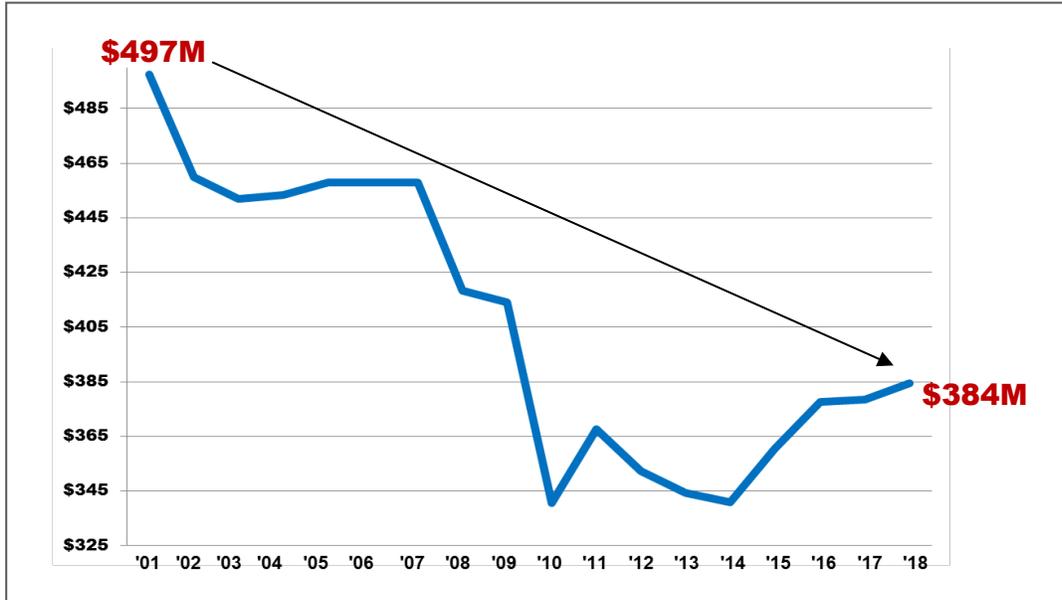
### **Conclusion**

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. We know that our state funding through the Public Library Fund is essential to delivering services at the local level.

In conclusion, we are urging members of the Ohio Senate to make public libraries a priority in this budget and to restore the PLF to 1.7% - this will help to hold us harmless from any additional unintended reductions in state funding that may result from tax reform changes. We look forward to working with you over the next few 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



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
House Bill 166 Testimony  
Cleveland Public Library  
Felton Thomas Jr., Executive Director & CEO  
May 22, 2019**

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill (HB) 166, the biennial budget bill for FY20-21.

My name is Felton Thomas Jr. and I am the Executive Director and CEO of the Cleveland Public Library. I am also a member of the Ohio Library Council's Government Relations Committee, past president of the Public Library Association at the national level, board president of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank as well as community impact chair for the United Way of Greater Cleveland.

This year, the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. However, we know that the library would not have thrived this long without the citizens of Cleveland and the state of Ohio. Our patrons not only trust us, but see us as an important component of their communities. Last year CPL had a total attendance of **2.3 million** for the year. We circulated over **5 million** digital and physical items to our library patrons, and hosted more than **19,000 programs** for children, teens and adults. Our computers were utilized more than **700,000 times** and our Wi-Fi, located in each and every branch, was used **1.7 million times**. These figures demonstrate as the years have gone by, our importance to the community has not only sustained but strengthened.

In our most recent strategic plan we focused on addressing community deficits, forming communities of learning, and ensuring residents were prepared for the future digital environment. We gave significant attention to education, workforce development, and digital literacy, all subsets of our strategic priorities. I am pleased to say in the years since we have done an exceptional job at implementing programs and providing resources in all of these vital areas that have had a positive impact on our Cleveland and Ohio community. But the need is ever-growing.

### Impact in Education

In terms of education, our early childhood literacy & academic support programs focus on building support for young children's first year of school. Other programs such as story times and Read to the Beat, teach reading readiness and literacy skills to children at a young age. We have also addressed the summer slide through our summer reading initiative and engaged children in STEM-related programs such as our science and robotics clubs.

Our goal is to also provide supports that address the child's whole-self. This includes social, emotional, and health components. For example, our partnership with the Greater Cleveland Foodbank allowed us to serve more than **150,000 meals** to students last year. Additionally, our partnership with MetroHealth and North East Ohio Medical University (NEOMED) residents provide youth and their parents free health screenings and medical advice, right in our library branches. We seek to expand partnerships such as these.

### Impact in Workforce Development

Our workforce development efforts include our partnerships with a number of organizations in the city and region aimed at ensuring our patrons have the necessary skills and resources to acquire a sustainable wage. We host Ohio Means Jobs and ASPIRE Greater Cleveland (i.e. adult basic literacy services) at our branches. Additionally, Lynda.com, a statewide partnership with LinkedIn, is accessible at all of our branches allowing our patrons to up-skill and re-tool by taking free online classes. Since launching in July of 2018, more than **60,000 individuals** in the state of Ohio have utilized this service. We know this number will grow as awareness of the service increases.

### Impact in Digital Literacy

Last, but certainly not least, digital literacy is another area that CPL has invested in significantly. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, knowing how to use and operate a computer and the internet is vital for all. At our branches we host many digital literacy courses that help introduce our patrons to beginner and advanced computer and internet skills. Courses include but are not limited to Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, all of which are needed in today's workforce.

CPL also currently has mobile hotspots available to our patrons, with plans to expand our inventory. CPL loans out hotspots for walk-ins on a first-come, first-served basis to anyone over eighteen years of age with a CLEVNET library card in good standing. The demand for our hotspots is significant given the fact that 1/3 of the city's residents do not have access to the internet in any form and as many as 1/2 of the city's residents have no fixed wired home internet access.<sup>1</sup>

### Closing

Public libraries are doing more and more for communities; however, public funding has not matched this growth. Ohio libraries have lost more than \$113 million since 2001.

Therefore, I formally ask that you consider increasing the Public Library Fund from **1.68% to 1.7% of the GRF**. While this is still lower than funding prior to the recent recession, it is an increase that would help public libraries significantly.

Libraries are centered on the idea of access for all. By increasing the PLF, we will be better equipped to leverage our infrastructure and resources to provide that access to our Cleveland residents and the residents in the state of Ohio. We believe that increased funding for our efforts will lead to great improvements in our communities as more and more residents rely on the library for resources and services in their neighborhoods. More after-school programming so that our youth spend more time learning and staying engaged, more adult literacy programming aimed at alleviating illiteracy in our region, and more partnerships to help our communities holistically will allow public libraries to remain vital anchor institutions in local neighborhoods.

We hope that you see us as partners in your efforts and support the efforts of libraries in our state. Doing so will ensure that Ohio continues to have premier public library institutions for decades to come.

I am happy to answer any questions and thank you for your time and consideration.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.digitalc.org/connect-theunconnected>

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