



Westerville Public Library

House Finance Committee House Bill 110 Testimony March 10, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill (HB) 110 on behalf of the Westerville Public Library, located in Westerville, Ohio.

My name is Erin Francoeur and I am the Executive Director of the Westerville Public Library. Organized under Ohio State law as a school district public library, the Westerville Public Library's service area includes Westerville, parts of Columbus, northeast Franklin County and southern Delaware County. The Library serves an estimated population of 91,000 people. Library funds are derived primarily from the Public Library Fund and a 2.0-mill property tax levy passed on November 8, 2011.

I am here to share my thoughts on certain provisions in the budget proposal related to the Public Library Fund (PLF) and I hope to show how the Westerville Public Library has supported our local community throughout the pandemic and how we can continue to assist in Ohio's recovery efforts.

On an average day in 2020 at the Westerville Public Library, patrons:

- Borrowed 4,912 items
- Received 121 items via delivery
- Took 7 online learning courses
- Attended 2 events (63 attendees per event)
- Picked up 27 custom-made activity kits

Within a week of the stay-at-home order, our librarians were livestreaming storytimes from their living rooms. And within two weeks of closing the Library's doors, we launched Tutor.com, a free virtual homework help and career coaching service available 7 days a week. In 2020, digital checkouts and database usage increased by 40%. And checkouts of kids & teen materials increased by an unprecedented 88%.

Staying connected while apart remained a top priority. In 2020, the Westerville Public Library staff:

- Hosted 40+ career help events for job seekers
- Presented history lessons, book talks, and library instruction for K-12 virtual classrooms
- Offered one-on-one virtual appointments to help kids strengthen their reading skills
- Called our senior and homebound customers to check in while home deliveries were paused
- Met with book clubbers via Zoom
- Offered new convenience services such as subscription bundles, virtual chat, and text message reference assistance
- Launched a virtual exhibit and highlighted our history collection via a custom-produced video series and social media
- Recorded hundreds of custom-produced podcasts and videos highlighting books, library services, and early literacy tips

Those without reliable Internet access could take advantage of:

- Census, tax, and voting supplies available for pickup 24/7
- Contactless printing
- Dial a story (stories read aloud by our librarians, available via phone 24/7)
- Free books distributed via 13 different Little Free Libraries around town
- Free wi-fi access with the addition of new outdoor seating
- Wi-fi hotspots to connect to the internet at home.
- Story trail

Every day, our patrons tell me how the Library has remained a valued part of their daily lives during the pandemic. The Library is an anchor for parents needing to break up the monotony of the day with a virtual storytime, for kids craving activities away from their computer screens, for grownups seeking a change of scenery and a stable internet connection, and for everyone wanting a welcome escape from the stress of a challenging year. (See attachment A for the Westerville Public Library's 2020 Year in Review.)

As we come out of the pandemic, the Westerville Public Library will be focused on bolstering our core services like job help, early literacy initiatives, homework help, internet & computer access, and support for civic initiatives such as tax forms and election information. A reduction in state funding from 1.7 to 1.66% would restrict these efforts and result in a negative impact on our community.

The Westerville Public Library has received the Ohio Auditor of State Award with Distinction and the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from 2018-2020. For every \$1.00 spent by the Westerville Public Library, the total economic benefit provided to our community is \$4.06. (This amount was determined using 2019 data and the Ohio Library Council's ROI Calculator.) I hope that this effectively demonstrates the Westerville Public Library's commitment to ensuring that the funds we receive from the state via the PLF are maximized to offer the most value possible to our community.

Thank you for your time and we will be more than happy to answer any questions.



2020 Year in Review

Day Day

4,912 items borrowed
221 videos viewed

121 items delivered
2 events / **63** attendees

32 free books distributed
27 activity kits distributed
20 podcasts played

On average, every cardholder borrowed 19 items in 2020.



Items Borrowed



1,792,902 total collection usage

- + 88% digital checkouts for kids & teens
- + 40% digital checkouts & database usage



Events



777 live events **22,989** attendees
16,848 on-demand views

Highlights in 2020



Meet the Author: Jodi Picoult | Chick Hatching | Hilda the Dragon | Innovation Lab | Story Trail | Outdoor Seating



Level Up

Your library card has the power to get you to the next level.

Gain a Competitive Edge

2,481 online learning courses taken
709 wi-fi hotspots borrowed

7 days/week career coaching service
46 job help events



Unlock Potential

244 virtual storytimes
27,667 items delivered to **117** locations
11,719 free books distributed
7,466 free activity kits distributed
1,459 reading challenge participants

(((Find Your Voice)))

1,412 virtual exhibit views
(Trailblazing Women of Westerville)
177 writing contest submissions
27 author visits & writing workshops

Pass the Test **A+**

ACT Crash Course
Book talks (231 podcasts & videos)
Read with Me initiative
Tutor.com subscription
Virtual classroom visits

Community Partnerships

Greater Westerville Hiring Event
WARM enrichment kits distributed with free lunches
Westerville Caring & Sharing back-to-school drives
Westerville Counts 2020 Census Committee
WeRISE

Awards, Honors & Grants

2020 Top7 Intelligent Community
Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
Nextdoor Neighborhood Favorite
Ohio Auditor of State Award with Distinction

\$80,500 Google Ad Grant
\$25,000 Coronavirus Relief Fund
\$4,000 Dollar General Literacy Foundation
\$3,000 LSTA Mini Cares Act
\$500 Resilient Communities

Coming Soon

2021

1,000 Books Before Kindergarten
New museum exhibit
Westerville Voices

Creating a bridge to **OPPORTUNITY** through open access to
INFORMATION, INSPIRATION & UNDERSTANDING