



MENTOR

PUBLIC LIBRARY

To: Ohio Senate Finance Committee

From: Cheryl Kuonen, Executive Director of Mentor Public Library

Date: May 19, 2021

Re: Sub. HB 110 - Written Testimony

Good afternoon Chairman Matt Dolan and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present written testimony on behalf of Ohio's public libraries.

My name is Cheryl Kuonen and I am the Executive Director of the Mentor Public Library. My Library is a school district library which serves the communities of the City of Mentor, Mentor on the Lake, and a portion of Concord Township all located in Lake County, Ohio. My library has four locations, including a public library in the high school which is a partnership with our school district. I have worked in Ohio public libraries for almost twenty-five years, starting as a 16-year-old shelver at the Mentor Public Library.

I have personally seen the many wonderful changes and positive impact of Ohio public libraries over the last twenty-five years. During that time our public libraries have always worked to serve the ever-changing needs of our communities. I always say that public libraries are here to help individuals and communities achieve their goals, whatever they may be.

The last fifteen months have certainly been extraordinary for every citizen in our country and state. We've all experienced change and confusion – and for many it has become overwhelming. This is where our incredible public libraries come in. Libraries are a place of knowledge, information, relaxation, and escapism. We have been here non-stop and unwavering for our patrons and communities throughout the pandemic.

Ohio's public libraries are exceptional at seeing a need in our communities and pivoting to meet that need. During the pandemic many of us lent out hotspots to help families working and schooling from home. We increased our Wi-Fi range outside our buildings so that people can use the internet 24hrs a day. We increased our online resources of books, movies, newspapers, and more to allow patrons to use our materials remotely. We figured out ways to get physical materials to our patrons safely when visiting inside our buildings or curbside. We've provided story times and lifelong learning programs throughout the last 15 months.

Below I've included the spreadsheet stats of our library system for 2020. But I can't stress enough that public libraries are so much more than numbers. Just last week we had a patron approach the reference desk to tell us his story and the impact the library made on him.

Six years ago that patron was homeless. He was living in a dumpster and didn't have a job. He visited our library every day. It was a place to stay warm or cool, and to read and learn. He wanted us to know how grateful he was that we welcomed him in everyday during this low point in his life and to let us know that he now has a job, a home, and a car.

When I started as Executive Director at Mentor Public Library just over four years ago, a grandmother approached me. She was taking online classes through our database resources because she wanted her granddaughters, who were in her custody, to see that you can make something of yourself regardless of age or circumstance.

These are just two examples of how public libraries have positively impacted someone's life. Our Ohio public libraries have thousands of stories that don't fit in a spreadsheet.

This is why having stable and consistent funding in the Public Library Fund (PLF) is so important. Currently we receive 1.7% of the GRF. The House version of the budget lowers our funding to 1.66% and a 2% income tax cut will further reduce the total GRF. Though those differences may appear small, it will have a huge impact on public libraries' funding and their ability to help individuals and communities achieve their goals. There are currently 50 library systems in Ohio that rely fully on the PLF to support their services to the community.

I ask that you consider maintaining the PLF at the current 1.7% of the GRF and hold libraries harmless with any income tax cuts.

Thank you for your consideration.

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

MENTOR PUBLIC LIBRARY



8,378

OPEN HOURS



1,822

ASK A LIBRARIAN
QUESTIONS
ANSWERED

399



473

ONLINE EVENTS
CREATED



74,537

PROGRAM
PARTICIPANTS



696,207

COLLECTION ITEMS
WERE CHECKED OUT



24,886

PUBLIC COMPUTER
SESSIONS



35,410

WIRELESS
SESSIONS



373,055

WEBSITE VISITS



495,398

DIGITAL
CONTENT USE

26,161

DRIVE-THRU/
CURBSIDE
DELIVERIES



Mentor Public Library

Your Destination for Information

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