



Senate Finance Committee
State Operating Budget, Sub. HB 110 – Written Testimony
May 19, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today on State Operating Budget, Sub. House Bill (HB) 110 on behalf of all Ohio public libraries, including my own, the Lima Public Library, located in Lima, Ohio.

My name is Gary Fraser and I am the Executive Director of the Lima Public Library. We are a school district public library; however, our service area includes not only Lima, but the majority of Allen County with branch locations in the communities of Cairo, Elida, Lafayette and Spencerville. Our Library proudly serves an estimated population of 102,000 people. As a library system without a local levy, we are reliant on the Public Library Fund (PLF) and feel it is critical that the fund's formula be sustained at 1.7% of the General Revenue Fund.

Throughout the COVID pandemic, the Lima Library continued serving our communities. During the stay-at-home order, we quickly created an online path to card registration allowing new users to access our materials. We also heavily promoted our digital resources and collections, maintained daily communication with our public via social media, and boosted our WiFi signal and made it available 24/7. Upon returning to work, we quickly adapted to the new environment. We created a curbside service that averaged nearly 300 cars per week and began providing virtual programming and story times in place of in-person ones. Our first summer reading drive-through event drew 111 cars in two hours and was a great indicator that our public needed their Library. Our Board of Trustees and Library staff were eager to be a part of our community's recovery and worked hard to make it successful.

Like our fellow libraries, we opened our doors to the public as soon as we felt confident that we could provide a safe environment. We implemented safety protocols and remained vigilant in our practices. Our patrons have expressed gratitude toward our measures and are grateful for the services we have provided during the pandemic. Much of the new services and practices developed during this crisis will continue as part of our new normal operating procedures.

Financial support of public libraries through the Public Library Fund is critical. Supporting the PLF is simply one of the best investments the State Legislature can make for our citizens as 8.4 million Ohioans are cardholders among our 251 public libraries. The return on investment in our public libraries is a tremendous benefit to all.

On behalf of the Lima Public Library, thank you for your dedication to making public libraries a priority for the state of Ohio and successful cornerstones of our communities. I ask you to please consider maintaining the Public Library Fund's formula at 1.7% of the General Revenue Fund in this State Operating Budget.