



DAYTON  
METRO  
LIBRARY

**Senate Local Government and Elections Committee**

**Re: Substitute House Bill 110**

**Written Testimony May 4, 2021**

**Jeffrey Trzeciak, Executive Director**

Greetings, Chairman Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Local Government and Elections Committee.

**Dayton Metro Library in the Community**

My name is Jeffrey Trzeciak, and I am the new Executive Director of Dayton Metro Library (DML), in Montgomery County. I'm a proud native Daytonian. Although my professional career has taken me across the nation to serve in academic and public libraries, there has always been a pull to return to Ohio and Dayton. Part of that draw is my family and wonderful neighbors; part comes from Ohio's amazing resources; and part of the draw was to work in a state that believes in the educational, economic, and community building power of public libraries. The people of Ohio, with the leadership of their elected officials, have seen the impact of strong libraries, and they are willing to invest in sustained excellence through the Public Library Fund.

In my first month back in Dayton, I've already been wowed by the innovative programs and resources DML has delivered to the community through the COVID crisis, and continuing as we work to restart Ohio.

- The launch of DML's *Get Connected*, delivering home-based broadband internet to hundreds of households across Montgomery County – providing a technology lifeline for adults displaced from work and families struggling to keep up with virtual school.
- Dedicated rooms for our most disadvantaged community members access to tele-health and tele-counseling appointments using Library technology.
- Dozens of online storytimes, STEM programs, and arts clubs – providing a consistent source of quality educational programming in the midst of uncertainty.
- One-on-one homework help sessions – offered in-person or virtually to reduce the negative effects of this “lost” school year.
- The creation and distribution of “Take and Make” activity boxes to provide families and children with tools for educational activities at home.
- A new partnership with ODJFS, helping residents not only apply for unemployment, but also access all the resources of Ohio Means Jobs.
- Job Seeker programs that strengthen resumes, facilitate job searches, and conduct mock interviews to get Ohioans back to work.
- 232,600 meals distributed at 18 branch library location for kids in need in 2020.

These examples – of internet connectivity, educational support, workforce development, and meeting the most basic human needs – are just some of the many ways DML has pivoted in the past year.

**Ohioans are counting on their libraries more and more to meet their informational and educational needs.** It is in this environment of enhanced services during a time of uncertainty, that I appeal to you to maintain the Public Library Fund at its current level of 1.7%.

## Public Library Fund (PLF)

Public libraries spark a thriving community – offering technology, early childhood education, workforce development, and after-school and out-of-school programming. **The Public Library Fund (PLF) provides a reliable funding stream so libraries can deliver the critical services that communities rely upon**, and meet changing needs. I understand you have many competing priorities, but I urge you to maintain the PLF at 1.7% of the General Revenue Fund.

Understanding there are many issues at play, please allow me to clarify some details:

- There are estimates that show budget revenues going up in 2022-2023. However, **in six of the last seven years, the actual distribution to the PLF has fallen woefully short of LSC/OBM estimates** – sometimes as much as a loss of \$29.2 million in a single year.
- With the proposed income tax reduction affecting the base of the GRF, libraries will be doubly disadvantaged.
- **Costs are rising for public libraries.** For example, digital circulation has skyrocketed, but public libraries already pay five times more for eBooks than traditional customers.

Libraries have been asked to do so much to serve Ohio during COVID. Now, with special resources and programming to support Ohio's recovery, we simply can't afford a funding cut. On behalf of the nearly 400,000 Ohioans who are Dayton Metro Library cardholders, **I urge you to maintain the PLF at 1.7% and hold libraries harmless from any unintended consequences that may result from tax reform.**

## American Rescue Plan (ARP)

As you consider State funding, I want to clarify some misinformation around federal funds. **Ohio's public libraries are NOT eligible for the federal funding** that will be directed to other states' libraries or any of the funding directed to local governments to cover operating costs.

- Different from other states, Ohio's public libraries are considered separate political subdivisions from city or county governments, therefore libraries are not automatically receiving the stimulus dollars.
- You may have heard of stimulus funding received by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services. Of that, Ohio will receive approximately \$4.5 million to divide among university libraries, K-12 school libraries, and public libraries. These funds are typically distributed through competitive grants for special projects and may not be used toward operating costs.

This leaves Ohio's public libraries without the infusion of federal funds that are keeping local governments and other states' libraries afloat. This is our reality. **As you discuss whether to maintain the PLF at the current rate of 1.7% or to allow it to be cut, please know that it would be devastating for libraries to suffer the double blow of being excluded from the federal funding, while also having state funding cut.**

## Conclusion

Sometimes we get so used to our own circumstances that excellence can appear commonplace. I urge you to remember that Ohio public libraries are strong partners for education, workforce development, and technology because of your strong support of the PLF. Across the nation, Ohio is recognized as a leader and greatly envied for this vision. It would be detrimental to Ohio's standing in the national conversation, to the current and potential success of Ohio's cities and towns, and most importantly, to the people of Ohio, to cut the PLF. **I ask you to please restore the PLF to 1.7%.** Thank you for your time.