



Senate Finance Committee
Amended Sub. House Bill 33
Written Testimony
June 8, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Amended Substitute House Bill 33.

As the statewide organization representing Ohio's 251 public library systems, we are writing to share our thoughts on the Public Library Fund (PLF) and the amended substitute version of House Bill (HB) 33, the biennial state budget bill.

We would like to formally say thank you for making public libraries a priority in the substitute bill and for recognizing the strong partnership we have with the state in delivering services at the local level. Maintaining the PLF percentage at 1.70%, and codifying it in permanent law, will help public libraries in every county of Ohio continue to provide vital services to their patrons.

State funding for Ohio's public libraries through the PLF ensures there is a minimum level of services provided to Ohio residents statewide, regardless of their zip code. State funding through the PLF is critically important because it remains a primary source of revenue for public libraries. Statewide, more than 51% of the total funding for Ohio's public libraries come from the state through the PLF. In addition, 20% of Ohio's public library systems (49 out 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.

Additionally, the Ohio Library Council would like to thank you for maintaining language added by the House to increase the competitive bidding threshold from \$50,000 to \$75,000. This change will give public libraries more flexibility in making some improvements to their facilities. We also would like to thank the Senate for restoring language and giving local governments and libraries the option to seek replacement levies. This option was eliminated in the House passed version of the budget.

We also appreciate the Senate for recognizing potential impacts on the PLF associated with tax policy changes and holding public libraries harmless from any potential loss of revenue associated with the Expanded Back-To-School Sales Tax Holiday.

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As you work to finalize the budget between now and June 30, we respectfully ask you to consider the following:

- Maintain the PLF in permanent law at a minimum of 1.70% of the total GRF. If any additional changes are made to the budget that would indirectly reduce the PLF, we are respectfully asking the General Assembly to increase the PLF to offset those reductions.
- Provide facilities funding to public libraries for emergency needs and critical repairs. Unlike other local governments and schools, Ohio's public libraries did not receive direct federal funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). We are respectfully asking the General Assembly to use these one-time funds to support public libraries with funding to address emergency needs and critical repairs for roofs, elevators, HVAC systems, flooring and security systems.

Again, we would like to formally thank the Senate for its commitment to public libraries. The Ohio Library Council and public libraries across the state look forward to working with you to maintain state funding to Ohio's 251 public library systems through the PLF and to ensure that their 7.7 million cardholders continue to receive vital services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Francis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Michelle Francis
Executive Director, Ohio Library Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Jay Smith
Director of Government and Legal Services, Ohio Library Council