



Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
The Honorable Rick Perales, Chairman
FY 2018-19 Budget Testimony
Testimony from Burt Logan, Executive Director & CEO
February 16, 2017

Dear Chairman Perales and members of the Higher Education Subcommittee:

Thank you for allowing us to host you here today at the Ohio History Center. I am Burt Logan, Director and CEO of the Ohio History Connection. It is a pleasure to welcome you and to thank you for allowing us to host you here today at the Ohio History Center. To many people, the Ohio History Center, this building, is the Ohio History Connection. That is simply not true – yes, it is our headquarters but as you will see and hear, only a small fraction of our work is confined to this building. The great bulk of what we do stretches out from here to your districts, to each of Ohio's 88 counties, and to millions of Ohioans.

As you know, the State of Ohio, the Ohio General Assembly, and the Ohio History Connection have a longstanding and mutually beneficial relationship going all the way back to 1885. We appreciate the sustained support we've received in recent years from the Ohio General Assembly. The confidence you have shown in us has helped create an environment where Ohio history is thriving. When the state invests in its history, it positions us to generate additional philanthropic and other non-state dollars for what we do—tell Ohio's story.

I often characterize what we do as the state's nonprofit history partner this way... The Ohio Revised Code gives us a wide variety of public history assignments that we carry out for Ohio and Ohioans in exchange for state GRF support. With your support, the Ohio History Connection bundles these into five primary responsibilities:

- We operate and provide public access to the state's archives, which we do through our Museums and Library Services Division;
- We are responsible for maintaining the state's historic sites and museums, which we do through our Historic Sites and Facilities Division;
- We promote history education statewide by working with schools (K-16), social studies teachers and local history organizations all across the state, which we do through our Outreach Division;
- We have an important role in protecting and facilitating the long-term preservation of Ohio's historic buildings and landscapes, which we do through the State Historic

Preservation Office whose tax credit programs have been the catalyst for significant Ohio job creation; and

- Finally, we are pleased to operate the state museum, the Ohio History Center, where we showcase Ohio's world-class history and artifact collection as well as offer a diverse range of public programming

Thank you for building in time this morning to take a tour of the Ohio History Center museum and archives. We have so many interesting stories to tell and we are eager to show you around.

You might notice that the Ohio History Center—with its strong and assertive Brutalist-style architecture—is nearing its 50th birthday. That milestone will include the building's nomination for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This coming anniversary gives us the opportunity to not only reflect on the building's past, but to plan for the future of our campus here at the corner of 17th Avenue and I-71. Recently the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission published a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an architectural programming plan that will assess the current spaces, activities, attributes and deficiencies of the Ohio History Center campus. The resulting work from this RFQ will guide us as we plan for the future.

We often say that history is a growth business. It accumulates every year. We moved into the Ohio History Center in 1970. Forty-seven years later, we're facing the problem of running out of space. Our collections storage facilities are about a mile from here at Hudson Road and Silver Drive. I hope you will come back for a tour of the cramped and, frankly, unsuitable spaces so you can better grasp the need for expanded and modern facilities. The buildings are converted warehouses where we have stored Ohio's priceless historic, archaeological and natural history collections since the early 1980s. Back then, they were meant to be merely a temporary solution. That was more than 35 years ago!

Artifacts today sit in cold storage where the public does not generally know about nor have access to them except in rare instances. Each of the objects in our care is significant. Looking to the foreseeable future they should be located here on the campus of the Ohio History Center, in a secure and accessible environment. Our vision and plan is to make that a reality soon.

Having commented on the *quantity* of Ohio's history, I feel it is important to speak for a moment about the *quality* of Ohio's history. Our Civil War and archaeological artifact collections are recognized as fully world-class. Although Ohio is just 34th in geographic size, only New York and Massachusetts have more properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. But why just think nationally? We have many sites in Ohio that are internationally significant. The American Indian earthworks – built 2,000 years ago that are preserved at the Newark Earthworks in Licking County, Fort Ancient in Warren County and at the National Park Service's Hopewell Culture National Historical Park – are making their way toward inscription on the World Heritage List, the highest and most esteemed designation possible. There are only 23 U.S. sites on the World Heritage List – and so far, none of them are in Ohio.

Inscription is likely to happen in the next couple of years and will be a huge boost for Ohio history and Ohio's economy.

The Ohio History Connection has been building momentum, meeting and exceeding goals as well as serving the needs of our visitors.

Here are some highlights of recent successes:

- Two important sites of 20th century history with standout significance joined the Ohio History Connection network last year: the John & Annie Glenn Boyhood Home in New Concord and two remaining buildings from Poindexter Village in Columbus, one of the first public housing projects in the nation.
- We created a unique initiative called “Ohio Open Doors,” a 10-day period in which local landmarks—important historic buildings and sites of all kinds—were invited to “open their doors” to the public, offering special tours or unique programming to visitors at no charge. This first-time event was done in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. Far exceeding our goal, 140 Ohio landmarks participated from September 9-18, 2016. This statewide event generated tremendous media coverage and community goodwill. The event generated more than 170 articles, including out-of-state media coverage, worth \$123,000 in earned media. Participating organizations gave the event glowing reviews. Ohio’s travel industry is asking that the event be repeated in 2018 – very likely on a larger scale.
- Anniversaries often provide great opportunities to reconnect the public to state and local history. Recently, the centennial of the Hayes Presidential Center & Library in Fremont provided a great opportunity to showcase the nation’s first presidential library. This year we are marking the centennial of America’s entry into World War I and the bicentennial of Zoar Village. These will be followed by anniversaries for the Neil Armstrong moon landing in 2019 (at Wapakoneta) and the centennial of the Warren Harding presidential election in 2020 (in Marion). These are big opportunities that we must plan for now.
- On the educational front, *Ohio As America* is the first truly electronic state history textbook in the nation. Version 2.0 launched in 2016 and has become a hit – it is currently used by more than 23,000 Ohio 4th graders. This is not simply a PDF document posted online, but a true interactive educational tool that includes assessments, videos, maps, lesson plans, and other colorful, exciting features. Not only is *Ohio as America* a more engaging textbook, but its electronic format provides schools with the resources and technology they need to excel. This continues to be one of our great success stories.
- We’re also the statewide coordinator for Ohio History Day, a national program that gets up to 7,000 Ohio students directly involved in *doing* history. Students choose a topic, tied to an annual theme, and conduct in-depth historical research. This is exciting and inspiring stuff that also promotes good citizenship. The students create

historical papers, dramatic performances, creative documentaries, museum-like exhibits and outstanding websites. Ohio's top students go on to College Park, Maryland, each summer, to compete at the national level. Ohio students are consistently ranked in the top tier at the national competition.

- The Ohio History Fund, supported by non-GRF income-tax refund donations made directly by Ohioans and by specialty license plate sales (line items 360-602 and 360-603), will present its annual grant awards at our Statehood Day event on March 1st. During its first five years, the Ohio History Fund has enabled 53 organizations to receive grants totaling \$522,000 across the state to showcase their part of our state's story. As we look for expanded ways to fund this popular program we hope the impact of the Ohio History Fund will increase accordingly.

In addition to these recent initiatives we continue to perform other important services for the people of Ohio:

- The State Archives serves more than 12,000 people each year by making accessible Ohio's archival resources for a variety of purposes ranging from family histories to legal cases and even film and television productions. Research requests come via in-person visits, e-mail, phone, letters and elsewhere from genealogists, students, educators, scholars, lawyers, the media, other history organizations, government offices and simply ordinary people in search of answers to questions. The State Archives and collections care are funded through budget line 360-501 (Education & Historical Collections).

- Innovation and engagement extends to the State Historic Preservation Office which has been operated by the Ohio History Connection since its inception in 1966. The State Historic Preservation Office has a tremendous impact on Ohio's economy by facilitating job creation in communities across the state. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of federal and state tax credit projects, properties listed on the National Register as well as the number of Certified Local Governments (local governments that create local historic preservation ordinances and consult with us). These are all signs of healthy growth in preserving the historical assets in our communities while at the same time spurring job creation.

- The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center is located in historic Wilberforce. The Museum was conceived in the 1970s and opened its doors to the public in 1988 as the first national museum celebrating African American history and culture. State GRF support to the Afro-American Museum line item has suffered disproportionately over the past 15+ years. In FY 2001 the Museum received about \$1.1 million in GRF. After being flat-lined at \$414,798 several years, it received a modest increase in the current budget. The Museum, which has been shifting from a national focus to telling more of an Ohio-specific story, has pressing basic operating needs. With the opening of the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument just down the street, there are more opportunities for collaboration and increased visitation.

- The Hayes Presidential Center, located in Fremont, just celebrated its centennial year as the nation's first presidential library, predating by two decades what would become the federal presidential libraries we know today. This was a great opportunity to showcase Ohio's presidents—in addition to President Hayes—during the Republican Party Convention in nearby Cleveland last summer. Recently refreshed with new exhibits and renovations the Hayes Presidential Center has expanded its hours, has grown its group tours and increased its collaboration with other presidential sites throughout Ohio.

To support this resurgence of interest in Ohio History, we depend on our people who work for the Ohio History Connection, approximately 200 professional staff members and 350 active volunteers. We began the 21st century with about 400 staff members and were down as low as 170 staff members at one point, a consequence of severe budget cuts made during the Great Recession. Not surprisingly, about 60 percent of our total budget (GRF, capital, private funds, etc.) is dedicated to payroll. Our staff members are truly dedicated, highly professional and responsive to the needs of Ohio's public, which includes you, your constituents and every Ohioan. We see you and the public as customers to serve and we do so with passion. We are proud of keeping our costs low, too. However, it is important for me to report to you that we are faced with some increased costs. After two years of stable prices we anticipate a jump this summer in the cost of health care benefits.

At nearly each of our more than 50 historic sites and museums across Ohio, we have a local site manager who works in partnership with our team at the Ohio History Connection. These partners – employees of local organizations – help keep Ohio's local historical sites and museums operating for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come each year. Our budget line item (360-502) for Site & Museum Operations supplies funds that supports, in part, the vital work of our local site partners. This support explains the health and vitality of our system of state memorials and historic sites.

Ohio is a microcosm of the entire country. More Ohioans are embracing their Ohio identity in everything from popular culture and social media to the wearing of simple Ohio t-shirts and pride in Ohio-made products. The Ohio History Connection has invested in building our communications and marketing staff, mostly with non-state funds, to better get the word out about the importance of our state's history and to share our Ohio stories along different paths. In addition to the traditional ways, we are promoting Ohio's story in local parades, at community festivals, online advertising, and even in Ohio's prisons (through our Distance Learning program).

We believe our ultimate responsibility is to create a climate where Ohio History can and is thriving. Instead of imposing a top-down, hierarchal approach, we have opted to put Ohio's story in the hands of Ohioans through innovation and engagement.

In closing, I want to remind you of additional information contained in your folders. Thank you again for taking the time to spend part of your afternoon with us at the Ohio History Center. It is our privilege and honor to host you here today. On behalf

of the Board of Trustees, the staff, our many partners, our statewide members, and the hundreds of thousands of Ohioans we touch annually, I pledge our full commitment to preserve and share Ohio's incredible story.

I have asked Christie Weininger, executive director of the Hayes Presidential Center, and Dr. Charles Wash, executive director of the National Afro-American Museum & Cultural Center, to also give brief remarks about their respective budget line items.

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