



WOOD COUNTY DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
Substitute House Bill 110 Testimony
May 4, 2021

Good morning, Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Local Government and Elections Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Substitute House Bill (HB) 110.

My name is Michael Penrod and I am the director of the Wood County District Public Library (WCDPL). I am also a member of the Ohio Library Council's Government Relations Committee. I am here today to share how we are serving our community in the time of COVID-19 as well as why a stable Public Library Fund (PLF) is important to our ability to serve.

Our library serves a population of over 60,000, from the busy college town of Bowling Green, to the suburbs of eastern Toledo, to the rural agricultural communities of southern Wood County. In 2019, we circulated 783,166 digital and physical items to the public (an increase of 52% since 2010). Additionally, our count of cardholders increased by 7.6%, even after purging 2,630 inactive cardholders.

Using OLC's Return on Investment calculator, for every dollar our library spent in 2019, we delivered \$4.69 in value to our community. If you add in the economic multiplier effect, this amount increases to \$5.93.

WCDPL's Pandemic Response

Like most of Ohio, our building closed mid-March 2020. As we went out the door, staff pivoted to deliver services remotely. We reallocated dollars to acquire more eBooks and audiobooks, extended at-home access to research databases, added chat reference service, upgraded our Wi-Fi to encompass our parking lot, and moved storytimes and author visits online. By May 18, we offered curbside services and contactless home delivery. Since May 18, I can proudly say that we have been delivering all core library services to our taxpayers.

We transitioned to a virtual Summer Reading Program, collaborating with a local manufacturer for STEM programs and teenagers in outdoor community service opportunities. We worked hard to prepare the building, and patrons returned to the library on July 7 for browsing and crucial computer access. We added tech support software so that we could help patrons use a computer while maintaining social distancing for staff. Book bundles, loaning scanners and a VHS converter, and starting **We're Your Library.**

251 North Main Street
Bowling Green, OH 43402
419.352.5104

108 North Main Street
Walbridge, OH 43465
419.666.9900

www.wcdpl.org

our own eBook and audiobook platform are all examples of new ways we are serving our citizens.

Public Library Fund Stability

As Michelle and Jay have stated, the PLF is not a line-item appropriation. I view it as a promise between the State of Ohio and its citizens in how we lift each other and ourselves up in every community so that we can have a more informed citizenry and a more productive economy for all.

As the State's monthly revenues ebb and flow, so does the PLF. Over the last ten years, WCDPL's actual PLF receipts have varied from estimates in amounts ranging from \$25,000 under to \$103,000 over estimate. When times are tight, we make practical adjustments.

When times are good, we can set aside funds for future needs such as building maintenance and other nonoperational expenses. Over the same ten years, our cumulative receipts have been \$318,000 over estimate. These funds have allowed us to replace our 1974 chiller plant in 2019 for \$160,000, and we plan to replace our aging heating plant in 2022 for about \$150,000.

This is one example of why the PLF and its stability are important. Since libraries do not receive funding from the State's usual Capital Appropriations process, having the PLF return a bit of growth during times of economic prosperity allows libraries to maintain the facilities entrusted to us by the taxpayer.

Michelle and Jay have shared that the PLF has missed its estimates in seven of the last eight years. I would advocate that this is a reason to focus more on the percentage share of the formula, and less on a projected dollar figure.

In 2008, WCDPL received \$1,637,396 from the PLF. In 2020, WCDPL received \$1,569,273. The 2020 distribution was still 4.2% less than that of 10 years ago, and without accounting for inflation.

I am here today to ask for your committee and the entire Senate to maintain the current PLF percentage at 1.70% of the General Revenue Fund.

In conclusion, I want to assure you that Ohio's public libraries remain strong and ready to serve the needs of Ohioans today and into the future. Much of this strength comes from the long-standing partnership Ohio's public libraries have had with the State of Ohio through the Public Library Fund (PLF).

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.