



Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
The Honorable Sen. Terry Johnson, Chairman
FY 2022-23 Senate Budget Testimony
Burt Logan, Executive Director & CEO
May 4, 2021

Dear Chairman Johnson, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

I am Burt Logan, Executive Director and CEO of the Ohio History Connection. It's an honor and privilege to be with you today to discuss House Bill 110 and how the Ohio History Connection fits into the state's biennial operating budget. As you know, the Ohio History Connection has a longstanding and mutually beneficial relationship with the State of Ohio dating back to 1885. As the state's official history partner, state funding (GRF and state capital dollars) makes up about two-thirds of our annual budget. 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 our role 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/research library with historical records that take up three entire floors of the Ohio History Center;
- We are responsible for maintaining the state's historic sites and museums, which we operate in partnership with local site managers in 40 counties;
- We promote history education statewide by working with schools (K-16), social studies teachers and local history organizations all across the state;
- 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 at the Ohio History Center that serves as our state headquarters and is where we showcase Ohio's world-class history and artifact collection as well as offer a diverse range of public programming.

Our mission is to spark discovery of Ohio's stories – to embrace the present, share the past and transform the future. The State of Ohio chartered the nonprofit Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society way back in 1885. Many things, including our

name, have changed and evolved since then. The breadth and diversity of our state's historical assets have only grown since then and are a great representation of what makes Ohio special:

- 58 historic sites and museums in the Ohio History Connection statewide network
- 76 National Historic Landmarks (the highest possible Federal designation) across the state, 15 of which are part of the Ohio History Connection
- More than 4,000 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (only New York and Massachusetts have more)
- 3 sites are moving forward for World Heritage List inscription (the Ohio History Connection's Newark Earthworks and Fort Ancient as well as the National Park Service's Hopewell Culture National Historical Park)

Audience research indicates that Ohioans have a high level of interest in and appreciation of history as a tool to understand the present. As the country moves closer to the 250th anniversary of our nation in 2026, now is a moment we can offer – *and are offering* – an abundant supply of Ohio history content to meet this demand.

We are pleased the Governor's proposed budget has allocated targeted investments of \$459,000 each year above our current GRF total in the Education & Historical Collections and the Site & Museum Operations Lines.

These are important investments in protecting the state's history collections as we begin a long overdue process of moving the state's artifacts from a remote location to the Ohio History Center campus on 17th Avenue. The increase will also be utilized to support our site partners across Ohio who receive modest stipends from the state to maintain the day-to-day operations of the more than 50 historic sites and museums we

operate across Ohio. This includes our newest partner at the Poindexter Village on Columbus' Near East Side – the James Preston Poindexter Foundation. The Senate recently passed legislation (SB 31) to add Poindexter Village to our existing network of historic sites and museums – and we thank you for your continued support.

We are appreciative of the Governor's investment in Ohio history and we ask the Senate to consider some further investments in the next two years. Specifically, a recent security audit of some of our historic sites and museums revealed just how much work we have ahead of us to address these gaps, especially at Serpent Mound in Adams County. Serpent Mound is regularly featured by national and international media and draws people from around the country and the world. These are expenses that cannot wait now that the sites are re-opening to the public. Serpent Mound is one of the handful of sites that the Ohio History Connection manages directly without a site partner – a change that just occurred March 1st. We see several challenges that can be addressed



The bicentennial of Ulysses S. Grant's birth will be commemorated in April of 2022. Grant was born in Point Pleasant in Clermont County and grew up in Georgetown in Brown County.

with more resources – namely, security, additional staff and most important, more public hours.

The coming biennium also presents great opportunities for public engagement. Next year we will commemorate the bicentennial of the birth of U.S. Grant. The legacy of Grant saving the Union and two terms as president are things we share with the entire country. His birth and coming of age in southern Ohio are uniquely Ohio stories and the existing Birthplace in Clermont County and his Boyhood Home in Brown County give us the opportunity to remind the public of this time in history and to help separate the man from the myths. The following year (FY 23) we anticipate earning the long-awaited inscription of several American Indian earthworks to the prestigious World Heritage List. The 2,000 years old Newark Earthworks in Licking County, Fort Ancient in Warren County and the National Parks Service's Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ross County comprise the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks nomination that will soon be sent forward to become Ohio's first World Heritage sites. While we'd love to circle a date on the calendar for this monumental achievement for Ohio, our success depends on numerous things. However, we do expect this to occur in FY 23. We ask the Senate to boost funding to the Site & Museum Operations line item (360-502) by \$700,000 each year to address these issues and opportunities of site security, the Grant bicentennial and World Heritage. We hope you'll agree these are investments that will bring great dividends to Ohioans. Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

The other line items are vitally important and I want to briefly touch on those. The State Historic Preservation Office (Line 360-504) gets most of its funding through a federal appropriation formula, but the state allocation is critical to meeting our necessary 40% match of the federal funds (a little more than \$1 million) that come through the National Park Service. The Hayes Presidential Museums & Library (Line 360-505) in Fremont was the nation's first presidential library and our team there is incredibly effective in stewarding the site, its history and the grounds of Spiegel Grove. Similarly, the programs and collections of the National Afro-American Museum & Cultural Center (Line 360-506) in Wilberforce stand should-to-shoulder with national museums and the Museum is regularly called upon to loan objects to other major institutions. The stories, the artifacts, the archival records and the people connected to all of that history is truly powerful! We thank the Ohio House for increasing GRF support for the Hayes and the National Afro-Am Museum.

The Educational Outreach (Line 360-509) we perform is truly a core part of our identity and our mission to serve Ohioans, educators and local history organizations statewide. I will have more to say about our educational outreach in a moment. As an aside, none of the appropriations for line (360-508) "State Historical Grants" remain with the Ohio History Connection. We serve as fiscal agent to disburse these funds in their entirety to the recipients.

The world has changed in obvious ways since our budget was reviewed before the Senate two years ago. In mid-March last year, when Ohio's schools moved to remote education, the Ohio History Connection quickly pivoted to support Ohio's teachers and families through its *Learn at Home* initiative. This increased online presence offers an extensive array of history education resources for Ohio's K-12 students as well as adult learners. We quickly communicated the availability of our *Learn at Home* web pages

through an established educator newsletter and blog that reaches 3,500 Ohio K-12 teachers, through our E-newsletter that reaches a general audience of more than 44,000, and through the media and social media, reaching hundreds of thousands of Ohioans. Annually visitation to our web site at www.ohiohistory.org has about 2.4 million views; from March-May last year, *Learn at Home* became one of our top viewed web pages.

The Ohio History Connection also worked early on to provide resources to our strategic partners across Ohio, including local historic site partners and local history-related organizations. First, we established the COVID-19 Hardship Relief Fund to provide emergency aid to our local site partners from Wapakoneta to Marietta who run the day-to-day operations of the Ohio History Connection site network. This amounted to \$90,000 in privately raised dollars going back to Ohio communities over and above the site's GRF stipend. Additionally, with support from Conestoga – a friends group – the Ohio History Connection distributed \$59,000 in private funds to 38 local history organizations not affiliated with the History Connection.

At the same time, we regrettably said goodbye to approximately 30 staff members at the end of FY 2020, victims of the inevitable staff reductions forced by the impacts of COVID. The reductions amounted to 15 percent of our staff, stretching our capacity to serve Ohioans. Further, our organizational leaders all took pay reductions of 10-20 percent. The Ohio History Connection secured a Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan last year to help us weather the first few months of the pandemic, and we are working now to convert that into a grant.

In the summer of 2020, we focused on strategic planning and three strategic priorities emerged out of this work:

- Sustainability (emphasizing long-term financial and environmental stewardship)
- Equity (focused on more inclusive history stories broadly representative of Ohio)
- Relationship-building (prioritizing external relationships with stakeholders)

These priorities will guide our work during the coming decade.

Despite the uncertainty of COVID, the temporary closures and the financial challenges ahead, there is a great deal for which we can be proud. A few highlights about our ongoing initiatives connecting Ohioans with our work:

Ohio as America – The online Ohio history textbook for thousands of Ohio fourth graders features interactive videos, maps and content not found elsewhere. The state's investment has prepared us to meet this moment and aptly serve the educational community.

Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credits – The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is the first point of contact, in partnership with the Ohio Development Services Agency, to determine eligibility for the very successful tax credit program. Our results are powerful—600 historic buildings in 70 communities have been rehabilitated and transformed from eyesores to economic development drivers—creating jobs and spurring even more nearby investment in our downtowns and Main Streets. For every \$1 million in state historic preservation tax credits, there is \$8 million in construction

spending and 80 jobs created in construction-related employment, according to a report by Heritage Ohio.

Ohio Open Doors – Begun in 2016, the intent of this unique biennial statewide celebration is to encourage the organizations that operate landmark buildings and unique places to offer special programming at no cost to the public during a 10-day stretch every other September. Due to COVID, the 2020 experiences were online, with dozens of Ohio organizations participating and opening their doors (virtually) to thousands of curious Ohioans. Because this event has proven so popular with the public, we expect to return to a “live” Ohio Open Doors event again, post-COVID, in 2022.

Ohio Historical Markers – There are now more than 1,800 historical markers sharing the stories of Ohio history all over the Ohio landscape in all 88 counties. During COVID, these markers offer Ohioans a popular and safe outdoor experience.

While the work of the Ohio History Connection occurs within the state’s borders, the organization’s reputation is known nationally:

- We are one of only nine state history organizations that are both Smithsonian Institution Affiliates and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, honors that were earned by rigorous peer examination.
- The State Historic Preservation Office is consistently ranked among the top three offices in the nation.
- Once the pending World Heritage inscription is earned, we will be the only state history organization stewarding World Heritage sites.
- Members of our senior staff have served or are currently serving on and chairing national professional boards.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the FY 2022-23 state operating budget with you this afternoon. Much work lies ahead and we look forward to continuing this longstanding public-private partnership with the Ohio General Assembly and the DeWine Administration. We stand ready to be a resource for Ohio and Ohioans Together, let’s capitalize on Ohio’s diverse history to help local economies, to improve the quality of life and, to support the future for our citizens and make them proud to call Ohio home.

I will be glad to answer any questions you have of me.

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