



**House Government Oversight Committee
House Bill 257 Proponent Testimony
March 31, 2023**

Chairman Peterson, Vice-Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill (HB) 257 on behalf of Ohio's public libraries.

My name is Jay Smith, and I am the Director of Government and Legal Services for the Ohio Library Council. The Ohio Library Council is the statewide association representing Ohio's 251 public library systems (rural, urban, and suburban) and the 7.7 million library cardholders they serve.

Ohio's public libraries are organized and governed by individual boards of trustees under Chapter 3375 of the Ohio Revised Code. Most local library boards are made up of seven trustees who are appointed by their local appointing/taxing authority depending on the type of public library system. These boards represent the communities they serve and their meetings, whether the full board or subcommittees of the board, are subject to Ohio's Open Meetings Laws. In addition, these trustees are voluntarily serving their communities without any compensation which is expressly stipulated in the Ohio Revised Code.

The library board is accountable to the public to see that the library is operated in an efficient and productive manner. This includes establishing policies, overseeing financial operations, planning and evaluating library services, purchasing and maintaining library property, and appointing a director and fiscal officer for the library.

With that said, HB 257 would allow for increased flexibility for library trustees and would ensure that these individuals could fully participate in public board meetings while also balancing the demands of family, work, and travel. For example, we had a library board member that was a secret service agent serving on their board and would have situations where he was not able to attend an in-person meeting due to the demands of his job. We also have seen many situations where trustees whose employment required them to travel regularly and/or some trustees that would spend several months in a warmer environment during the winter months. HB 257 would give these public servants the opportunity to continue being an active member of their board while ensuring that Ohio's Sunshine Laws are protected.

I want to thank Representatives Hoops and Claggett for introducing this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I will be more than happy to answer any questions.