



Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
House Bill 33 – Written Interested Party Testimony

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Chair Manning, Ranking Member Jarrells and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, thank you for the opportunity to submit written interested party testimony on House Bill 33.

The Role of Dayton Metro Library

The Dayton Metro Library (DML) is rooted in serving our community. DML's commitment to service spans numerous programs, including youth literacy and educational support, workforce development, technology, and our expansive collection of literature, audio and video resources.

DML's commitment to advancing knowledge, especially amongst our youngest patrons, is at the heart of our mission. DML is proud to offer our Homework Help program, which connects K-12 students during afterschool hours with free homework assistance, STEAM activities and reading coaching. Pandemic-related learning loss continues to threaten our children's future success, and DML is meeting that challenge through programs like Homework Help. Through a recently-awarded state grant, DML is excited to expand this valuable service to ten branches in our community.

Libraries are also a resource for both job creators and job seekers. DML hosts programs that assist those looking to start small businesses and non-profit organizations. Those seeking employment can access free resume assistance, interview preparation and job search strategies at DML. The Library also emphasizes youth career development through our annual Career Adventures Day, where nearly 1,200 junior high students are introduced to dozens of local industries and employers.

DML services and other hosted programming span countless other areas that are valued by our patrons, such as financial literacy courses, ACT/SAT prep, technology classes, laptop and iPad lending, ESL courses, book clubs, children's story time, cultural events and more.

Importance of the Public Library Fund

The state Public Library Fund (PLF) is the primary funding source for DML, comprising over 60 percent of our annual revenues. The PLF is a longstanding partnership between the state and its 251 public libraries.

DML was pleased to see the PLF established in permanent law at 1.7 percent of state General Revenue Funds (GRF) in the executive budget proposal. Setting the PLF as a percentage of the state GRF creates a partnership between the state and its public libraries. As state revenues grow, so too do public libraries.

DML relies heavily on that partnership to meet the growing demand and increasing costs of providing services. The number of patrons entering our facilities as well as the number of items checked out continues to increase following the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, DML has seen considerable demand growth for eBooks, which due to publisher pricing structures, often cost public libraries up to five times more than individual customers.

Absent state support through the PLF, libraries have limited options for funding. Libraries are not able to levy sales or income taxes and they do not receive proceeds from casino tax revenues. Furthermore, unlike other local governments, libraries were not eligible for federal American Rescue Plan Act funding. With few other funding sources, a strong PLF is essential for the continued health of Ohio's public libraries and their surrounding communities.

Impact of State Tax Reform

DML is closely monitoring ongoing discussions regarding reform of Ohio's tax code via House Bill 1 and other legislation. DML respectfully requests that should the state significantly reduce state income taxes in the operating budget, public libraries be held harmless from potential revenue losses. Increasing the percentage of GRF dedicated to the PLF beyond 1.7 percent would likely be the simplest method to offset any reductions.

Additionally, DML is closely monitoring proposed changes to Ohio property tax law and state-funded rollback programs. DML urges lawmakers to avoid potential changes to these programs that could destabilize and weaken the Library's voter-approved property tax levy.

Conclusion

Support for public libraries is key to strengthening communities and improving the lives of Ohioans. Libraries are continuously evolving to adapt to the needs of their communities, and DML is no different. We are proud to serve as a hub of educational achievement, workforce development, technological access and more. These services are only possible in partnership with the state through the PLF. We thank the General Assembly for their longstanding support of public libraries, and we ask that the partnership only strengthen further in House Bill 33.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about our testimony or DML's many programmatic offerings.