



800 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH
45202-2009

513-369-6900 Phone
513-369-4409 TDD
513-369-6993 Fax
CHPL.org

**Ohio House Ways and Means Committee
House Bill 1 Written Testimony
March 28, 2023**

Chairman Roemer, Vice Chair Merrin, Ranking Member Troy and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill 1.

My name is Paula Brehm-Heeger and I am the Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director of the Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library (CHPL). Our Library is one of the busiest in the United States, providing service to over 800,000 Cincinnati and Hamilton County residents through a network of 40 branch libraries, a major downtown Main Library, and a Distribution Center. Our Library is one of the 5 biggest public library systems in Ohio, and in addition to books and movies, brings access to e-learning services; remote work spaces; spaces for studying and tutoring; meals for children in the summer; and much more.

As written, House Bill 1 would adversely impact funding for the 251 public library systems across Ohio and the 7.7 million cardholders we collectively serve. The Legislation would reduce revenue to CHPL’s two main funding streams, since about half of CHPL’s funding comes from the state through the Public Library Fund (PLF), and the other half through our two local 1 mill tax levies. I understand that this legislation remains a work in progress, and am writing to inform you of some of the reasons why I oppose HB 1.

State funding through the Public Library Fund (PLF) is critically important since statewide, more than 51 percent of total funding for Ohio’s public libraries comes from the state through the PLF. HB 1 would result in a substantial decrease to the PLF, which currently receives 1.7 percent of the state’s General Revenue Fund (GRF). The Legislative Service Commission’s Fiscal Note for HB 1 estimates reductions to the Public Library Fund (PLF) at \$43 million in FY 2024 and \$31 million in FY 2025. This would reduce CHPL’s state funding by approximately \$7.5 million.

Some Ohio public library systems, including CHPL, rely on local funding through tax levies. Since HB 1 includes multiple changes to local property tax levies, public libraries and local governments could lose at least \$239 million. In 2022, CHPL received about \$2 million through the 10 percent rollback tax credit alone.

CHPL is a good steward of taxpayer dollars. For every dollar spent by CHPL, our community receives \$5.12 in direct benefits. CHPL has also received the Ohio Auditor of State Award with Distinction for 8 years in a row. As the General Assembly debates tax reform, I would like to respectfully ask that public libraries be held harmless from adverse fiscal impacts. If you have questions specific to the Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library, please feel free to contact me.

Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director

Paula Brehm-Heeger

Board of Library Trustees:

Nadine L. Allen, Retired Judge
Karen R. Clemons
Christopher A. Harding
Robert G. Hendon
Gregory W. Olson
Diane Cunningham Redden
Colleen Reynolds

*Chief Finance and Facilities Officer /
Fiscal Officer*
Molly DeFosse