



Budget Support Testimony FY2024 – FY2025

Given by Wendy Knapp, State Librarian, on April 25, 2023, before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Committee, I am Agency Director and State Librarian Wendy Knapp, and I am here today to provide testimony regarding the State Library's proposed budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025.

[The State Library of Ohio](#) has supported state residents, state employees, state agencies, and other libraries in Ohio for over 200 years, providing a wide range of library services. These services include access to millions of print and digital materials and expert reference and research assistance, serving as the official depository for state and federal government documents, and making available several meeting rooms at no cost for use by state agencies and libraries more than 500 times since July 1. The House's proposed budget of a 3% increase will not allow the State Library to meet our mission with the current rate at which costs are increasing. The Governor's proposal of a 5% increase would be a small but impactful increase to the State Library's operating budget for this biennium and would be a great step in helping the Library navigate these current uncertain economic times.

The State Library of Ohio administers programs and services that generate an annual savings of at least **\$295 million** for state agencies; public, school, academic, law, museum, institutional, and other libraries; and ultimately Ohio taxpayers.

Many of the State Library's current efforts are aligned with the priorities of the 135th General Assembly leadership and Governor DeWine, including Early Childhood Education and Literacy, Digital Inclusion, Workforce Development, Accessibility, and Health Information Literacy.

State Library Programs and Initiatives

Early Childhood Education and Literacy:

- [Ohio Ready to Read](#) is the ongoing collaboration of the State Library and the Ohio Library Council that helps public librarians educate Ohio's families on the importance of early childhood literacy and helps them learn how to ensure their children enter kindergarten ready to read and ready to learn.
- [The Children's Summer Library Program](#) provides Ohio libraries with high-quality materials to support summer reading programs that encourage Ohio's children and young adults to maintain and/or increase their literacy skills during the summer.
- **Summer Library Program Grants** provide federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to support libraries in the production of summer reading programs that engage and benefit their communities.



- **Literacy Grants**, funded with LSTA dollars, support the library's role in the learning experience where literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, and interact across a range of platforms and tools, and encompasses early literacy, digital literacy, functional literacy, and more.
- **STEM/STEAM Grants** assist libraries in preparing youth to be active learners and provide youth with a competitive edge as they prepare to join the workforce of tomorrow in a globalized, high-tech marketplace.
- A **partnership with Ohio Department of Job and Family Services** supported the GEER grant for early literacy in 2022 that allowed the State Library to provide over 7,700 books to daycares in 70 counties that serve populations with low literacy rates.

Digital Inclusion and Workforce Development:

- [Guiding Ohio Online](#) is a workforce development initiative which helps public libraries serving rural populations in Ohio to hire a dedicated technology trainer for those libraries' communities.
- Government documents depository responsibilities require the State Library to collect and preserve the published history of the state of Ohio as well as coordinate the statewide preservation of documents published by the federal Government Publishing Office and other agencies to ensure lasting access for all Ohioans.
- **Northstar Digital Literacy:** Assessments and curricula to meet the needs of job seekers who may lack the digital literacy skills needed to seek, obtain, and retain employment, as well as to perform other tasks in daily life
- **Mobile Wi-Fi Hotspots** for check out, purchased with grant funds from the State Library
- **Libraries Connect Ohio**, a partnership of the State Library, the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN), OhioLINK, and INFOhio, provides a core collection of resources to support education, workforce development, business growth, and lifelong learning and saves Ohio libraries over \$100,000,000 annually.

The State Library strives to provide equity of access to information to all Ohioans and ensures that patrons have the information they need to access and use our resources efficiently and effectively. We offer in-person, phone, website chat box, email, one-on-one online appointments, and reference form communications to our patrons.



Examples of key initiatives in the area of **Health Information Literacy and Information Accessibility** are:

- Most reference librarians at the State Library of Ohio hold **Consumer Health Information Specialization** certificates, which means that we can provide accurate, expert health information to our patrons.
- [Library Services for the Blind and Print Disabled](#) through the **Ohio Talking Book Program** ensure equity of access to state residents who are blind or print disabled, including nearly 1,000 military veterans and 240 children who are blind, have a visual or perceptual disability that prevents them from reading normal print, or have a physical disability that keeps them from being able to hold a book.
- [The Ohio Deaf Culture and American Sign Language \(ASL\) Collection](#) in the Ohio Digital Library includes fiction and non-fiction ebooks and videos for children and adults.
- [The State Library's Deafness and Outreach Collection](#) is a collection of print and other materials targeted toward interpreters, American Sign Language students, parents, and professionals working within Ohio's Deaf community.
- To help reduce food insecurity among Ohio's children and teens, the State Library has worked with the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio public libraries to provide information and to expand the number of public libraries serving as feeding sites for the **Summer Food Service Program**. Since the State Library became involved in 2014, there has been a 73% increase in the number of public libraries serving as feeding sites.

The State Library plays a unique and vital role in providing services to Ohio libraries and maximizes the use of public funds by facilitating resource and information sharing among Ohio's public libraries through programs that include:

- [The Serving Every Ohioan \(SEO\) Library Consortium](#), which includes 98 library systems in 49 Ohio counties sharing a catalog of over 8 million items
- [The Ohio Web Library](#), which makes a collection of thousands of digital publications and research materials available to all Ohio libraries, schools, universities, and residents at no cost to them
- [The Statewide Delivery System](#) supports statewide physical resource sharing among Ohio's public libraries and college and university libraries by delivering over 6 million books and other library materials between Ohio libraries for their users each year.



The administration of federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is a primary responsibility of the State Library. Federal LSTA funds are available to states based in part on the local match made using state funds to support the programs and services. LSTA dollars are used to fund Competitive Grants to Libraries, which are awarded to all types of libraries for a wide variety of projects, and to support several statewide programs including:

- [The Ohio Digital Library](#), which provides downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, and other digital content to library customers which saw an 11% increase in circulation last year
- **Planning and support services** for libraries including strategic planning, assessment and use of data, and library design/space planning
- **Support library services to all ages** through programs like Every Child Ready to Read, Reimagining School Readiness, Take 5!, NASA@ My Library, Choose to Read Ohio, and Celebrating Ohio Book Awards & Authors Grant Program
- **Professional development** for library staff to ensure when Ohio's families visit libraries, they encounter well-trained librarians aware of the latest trends and research to support individual enrichment.

None of this is possible without adequate funding. The economic difficulties that have affected every aspect of life have impacted the State Library's ability to provide the above services. The cost of statewide delivery, for example, increased by 130% in the last year, which includes an average fuel surcharge of 20%. Even at this increased rate, this service saves the public and academic libraries of the state over \$31 million annually. Furthermore, mandatory agency charges from the Department of Administrative Services have increased by 10% since FY 2020. For smaller agencies, even the smallest increase in any fee is difficult to absorb.

Governor DeWine's Executive Budget for FY 2024 and FY 2025 recommends a modest increase in GRF funding for the State Library of Ohio from the FY 2023 level. This level would enable the State Library to maintain critical services for the coming biennium. A 5% increase will support our federal funding for services to libraries by ensuring the required match and maintenance of effort for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, or IMLS, Grants to States Program. An increase of only 3%, however, as reflected in the version of the budget released by the House, would be the equivalent of another budget cut given the current economic climate.

Several library-related organizations are funded as pass-through line items in the State Library's budget. These organizations include [OPLIN](#), [the Ohio Library for the Blind and Print Disabled](#), Ohio's four [Regional Library Systems](#), and the Ohioana Library. Unfortunately, it can be easily misperceived by some that these pass-through funds are part of the State Library's operating budget.



The Governor's proposed level of funding from the General Revenue Fund would represent a 5% increase over the previous biennial budget and would be the first proactive increase for the State Library of Ohio's operating budget since 2008 when the State Library's GRF funding was \$1,100,000 more than the current proposed annual appropriation. While the current inflation rate surpasses the proposed increase, the State Library is confident a 5% increase will help to maintain services in the coming biennium.

Thank you for considering the State Library's budget proposal, which has been carefully developed to maximize limited state resources to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of critical information resources and services to Ohio government, libraries of all types, and Ohio residents. I am happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you.