



**OHIO SENATE
WORKFORCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE
CHAIR – THE HONORABLE JERRY CIRINO
H.B. #33: FY2024-25 OPERATING BUDGET**

**OHIOANA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
BUDGET TESTIMONY
April 25, 2023**

Testimony provided by David Weaver, Executive Director

Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohioana Library Association.

We are grateful that Governor Mike DeWine, in his “Ohio’s Time” Executive Budget for Fiscal Years 2024-25, has recommended Ohioana for an allocation of \$320,250 in each year, which is an increase of 5% from FY2022-23. Our line item, #350401, appears under the budget of the Library Board. My thanks to State Librarian Wendy Knapp for her support.

Since its founding by Ohio First Lady Martha Kinney Cooper in 1929, Ohioana has represented the model of a successful public/private partnership between the State of Ohio and a not-for-profit organization. Our current First Lady, Fran DeWine, continues in the tradition begun by Mrs. Cooper, serving as Honorary Chair of the Ohioana Board of Trustees, which is comprised of twenty-one members elected from around the state, and four appointees of the Governor’s. A list of these members is included with this testimony.

Through its collection, publications, educational partnerships, and annual events, Ohioana promotes reading and writing, connects readers of all ages with Ohio writers, and promotes and celebrates our state as one of the nation's great literary centers:

- The annual Ohioana Book Festival, chaired by Governor and Mrs. DeWine, was held this past Saturday at Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Main Library. The festival has grown from ten Ohio authors and a few hundred attendees in its debut in 2007 to nearly 130 authors and more than 50,000 live and virtual attendees this year. It is the state’s largest event celebrating Ohio authors and books.
- The Ohioana Book Awards, established in 1942 and presented every fall in the Ohio Statehouse Atrium, are America’s second-oldest state literary prize. Nearly every major Ohio author of the past 81 years has been honored, from James Thurber to Toni Morrison. Since 1982, we’ve also presented the Walter Rumsey Marvin Grant to an emerging Ohio writer age 30 or younger. The grant has helped launch a number of authors, such as Anthony Doerr, who went on to win the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in fiction.
- The Ohio Literary Trail, introduced in 2020, is comprised of more than 70 sites across the Buckeye State, shining the spotlight on Ohio’s unique role in shaping culture and

literature worldwide. The trail has helped spark literary tourism, an important source of economic growth and opportunity for the state.

- The *Ohioana Quarterly*, published since 1958 and a magazine on all-things literary in Ohio, is not only enjoyed by readers but is used by more than 100 public and educational libraries in the state as a resource in building their own collections.
- Educational partnerships, including Choose to Read Ohio with the State Library of Ohio and Ohio Center for the Book; the annual Poetry Out Loud competition for high school students in collaboration with the Ohio Arts Council; Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library of Ohio, spearheaded by Ohio First Lady Fran DeWine; and a new project with graduate students from the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University.
- And Ohioana’s Collection, the genesis of our library, called by Cleveland playwright Jerome Lawrence “Ohio’s literary Fort Knox,” is comprised of more than 80,000 items – books, sheet music, biographical files, papers, scrapbooks, and ephemera – all by Ohioans or about Ohio subjects.

Obviously, the past few years were challenging. We had to shift gears, serving the public while keeping everyone safe. I’m pleased to say that even during the pandemic, Ohioana did not cancel a single program – reaching more than 250,000 Ohioans virtually. We’re excited to be back live and in-person once again, serving the people and State of Ohio, as we have done for 94 years.

We are grateful that eleven Ohio Governors and 37 consecutive General Assemblies since 1949 have acknowledged Ohioana’s important work and affirmed the public value of its unique partnership with the State of Ohio by providing annual support, as authorized under the Ohio Revised Code (3375.61).

Of the \$320,250 recommended in the Executive Budget for Ohioana, \$195,000 will support a portion of salaries and benefits for the 4.0 FTE of the library. While our line item appears under the Library Board, Ohioana employees are not state employees; neither do they receive any state-provided benefits, nor participate in PERS. The remaining \$125,250 will pay for the space and the environment necessary to preserve and maintain the library collection, plus provide office space for staff and public space for researchers.

My thanks again to Governor DeWine and the members of the Ohio General Assembly, and to Ohioana’s Honorary Chair, First Lady Fran DeWine. And thank you again, Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee for this opportunity.

I would like to close with words from Geauga County’s Anthony Doerr, past Marvin Grant recipient and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *All the Light We Cannot See*. Here is an excerpt from the closing paragraph of a letter Tony sent in support of Ohioana in 2017:

“In a nation where reading is challenged on almost every front, from competing cultural entertainments, from deteriorating schools, from hyper-productive work schedules, the Ohioana Library Association is doing vital work to promote reading and writing all across Ohio, and they’re doing it on an already razor-thin budget. With their collections, quarterly journal, book festival, grants, and awards, they enhance, secure, and bind both the literary community of Columbus and the great state of Ohio.” – Anthony Doerr

Thank you.

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