



**Testimony of  
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**Before the Ohio House Committee on Arts, Athletics, and Tourism  
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Chair Miller, Vice Chair Hiner, Ranking Member Jarrells, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 732, the “Ohio, The Heart of it All Pass Program.”

My name is Rebecca Asmo, and I serve as Executive Director of Ohio Humanities, the statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Ohioans explore the ideas, history, and cultural traditions that shape our communities and shared human experience. Through grants, partnerships, and public programs, Ohio Humanities works with museums, historical societies, archives, and cultural organizations in communities across all 88 counties.

We are pleased to support House Bill 732 because it recognizes something that many of us in this room know to be true: when people visit cultural and historical sites, they do not just learn something new—they connect more deeply with their communities and their state.

Ohio is one of the most culturally rich states in the nation. From the birthplace of presidents, to the literary legacy of Columbus writer James Thurber, to the transportation innovations—canals, steamboats, railroads, automobiles, aviation, and space—that brought Americans to new frontiers, to the Native American earthworks that are now recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and much more, Ohio’s cultural landscape tells the story of America itself.

Programs that encourage Ohioans to explore these sites help strengthen both community identity and economic vitality.

Across the country, research consistently shows that cultural tourism is a powerful economic driver. Visitors who travel to experience history, museums, and cultural landmarks stay longer, spend more locally, and often return with friends and family. In Ohio, those visits support small businesses, restaurants, hotels, and local main streets—especially in rural communities and small towns.

But the value of history and culture goes beyond economics. Historical and humanities experiences help people understand the stories of the places where they live. They bring communities together around shared heritage. They encourage civic pride. And they create opportunities for lifelong learning that benefit Ohioans of all ages. As we face changing population demographics in our state, it's more important than ever that we encourage Ohioans to connect with the places where they live and build strong bonds with these communities.

Many of the organizations that would benefit from this program are small community institutions—local historical societies, museums, and cultural centers—that are often run by dedicated volunteers and modest staff. Programs like the “Ohio, The Heart of it All Pass” can help bring new audiences through their doors and introduce more Ohioans to the extraordinary cultural resources in their own backyard.

Ohio Humanities works with hundreds of these organizations every year through grants and partnerships. We see firsthand how important they are to their communities. Programs like the “Ohio, The Heart of it All Pass” align well with our efforts to build organizational capacity in Ohio's cultural sector. By encouraging exploration of Ohio's cultural sites, this legislation can help more residents and visitors experience the richness of our state's heritage while strengthening the organizations that preserve and share it.

Ohio has long been known as “The Heart of it All.” House Bill 732 reminds us that the heart of Ohio is not only geographic—it is cultural, historical, and deeply rooted in the stories of our communities.

Thank you for your leadership in supporting programs that help Ohioans explore and celebrate those stories.