



April 2, 2025

Chairman Brian Stewart  
77 South High Street, 13th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Funding for Historic Site System and Outreach Department – Line Items 360502 & 360509

Dear Chairman Stewart,

On behalf of the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau, I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the funding reductions proposed in the substitute version of House Bill 96. As a proud representative of Ohio's first capital and a region rich in historical and cultural significance, I urge you to reconsider and restore funding for line items 360502 and 360509 to ensure the continued protection, maintenance, and educational outreach of our invaluable historic sites.

The proposed reduction in funding for line item 360502, which supports Ohio's historic site system, threatens the preservation and accessibility of these treasured landmarks, such as Adena Mansion & Gardens that is located in Chillicothe. Governor DeWine's proposed funding level of \$11.721 million for FY 26 and FY 27 represented a vital step toward stabilizing these sites, many of which are managed by local partners operating on extremely limited budgets. However, the sub-bill's allocation of \$8.252 million falls significantly short of the demonstrated need. Without adequate resources, many sites, including those in small and rural communities, may face difficult decisions regarding staffing, maintenance, and even continued operation. The impact of such reductions extends beyond preservation; it directly affects the visitor experience and the economic vitality of our communities that rely on heritage tourism.

Similarly, the complete removal of funding for line item 360509 jeopardizes the essential work of the Outreach Department and the "Ohio as America" online textbook program. This educational resource is instrumental in ensuring that over 20,000 fourth-grade students receive a comprehensive and engaging Ohio history education. The Governor's proposal of \$1.96 million in funding would have allowed the program to expand and serve all 122,000 fourth graders in the state free of charge. While we recognize the constraints of the budgeting process, we respectfully request the restoration of funding at a level comparable to the current fiscal year's \$155,000 to sustain this vital educational initiative.

Ohio's historic sites are more than just landmarks; they are living stories that connect generations, attract visitors, and drive local economies. A strong commitment to their preservation and educational outreach is not only a tribute to our state's rich heritage but also an investment in

tourism, education, and community identity. We urge you and your colleagues in the House to restore these critical funding levels to support the future of Ohio's history and cultural tourism.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and appreciate your ongoing dedication to Ohio's historical preservation and tourism economy.

Sincerely,



Melody Young