



April 2, 2025

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

RE: Interested Party Testimony on Sub-House Bill 96

Chairman Stewart,

On behalf of the Ohio History Connection, we would like to offer some comments on the proposed substitute version of House Bill 96. We appreciate the time and effort everyone on this committee and others have put in to crafting the Main Operating Budget for the next two years.

As it relates to the line items directly impacting the Ohio History Connection, I first want to thank you for your support of our organization, our World Heritage Sites, our State Historic Preservation Office, and multiple museums that either fall under our jurisdiction or are great partners.

However, I do want to make note of two line items that we would like to respectfully request that the House to revert back to the As-Introduced version of the Main Operating Budget. First and most importantly, I want to talk about line item 360502 relating to our historic site system. The Governor proposed funding this line item at \$11.721 million in FY 26 and FY 27. In the sub-bill, this number is lowered to \$8.252 million in FY 26 and FY 27. We acknowledge that this is an increase of over \$500,000 from FY 25, however, as many of you heard from constituents in your respective districts, this number is insufficient. This past summer, our staff worked with each of sites- some operated by our staff, but the majority are operated by a local managing partner and we determined the amount of funding needed to have adequate staff, salary and benefits, improved maintenance, and focus on the visitor experience. That total was \$15 million dollar across the 58 sites.

While we pursued this amendment, authored by Rep. Joe Miller and Rep. Jodi Salvo, we understood that the proposed amount by Governor DeWine would also be a large step in the right direction. In many instances our sites are locally managed and so many of our partners try to run these facilities on shoe strings that are inadequate by any measure. Ohio's system can thrive but, frankly, only if the State of Ohio will invest in it at a level commensurate with the huge needs of so large a set of properties. There are dozens of sites—and many are in small or rural communities—that need more staffing and maintenance. If the funding level remains at \$8.252

million in FY 26 and FY 27, we will have to take a long look at our site system and make some really tough decisions regarding some of our state's most historic places.

The second line item I want to reference is Line Item 360509 which is in regards to our Outreach Department and the work that they do surrounding our online textbook entitled *Ohio as America*. This publication is used to assist our schools as they teach Ohio History to fourth graders. *Ohio as America* is currently being utilized by over 20,000 fourth graders throughout the state. The Governor proposed \$1.96 million in FY 26 and \$1.96 million in FY 27 as this is reflective in the requested change to ensure that Ohio History is taught adequately to all 122,000 4th grade student throughout Ohio, free of charge. This line item was removed in its entirety in the sub-bill and we would like to respectfully request that it is restored a funding level close to that of the current fiscal year of \$155,000.

We would like to thank you for your time and attention to these two matters and look forward to continuing to work with all of you as the state's history partner to produce a product and provide a service that everyone in our state and those who visit can be proud of.

Sincerely,

Megan Wood
Executive Director & CEO
Ohio History Connection