

HB96 Testimony
Senate Education Committee
Chauncey Montgomery, Director
May 12, 2025

Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Chauncey Montgomery, and I am the Director of the Community Library in Sunbury, Ohio. The Community Library is in eastern Delaware County, serving a population of around 25,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96. Specifically, I am here today to ask the Senate to restore Governor DeWine's proposal to raise the Public Library Fund (PLF) to 1.75% of the General Revenue Fund (GRF). The PLF plays a critical role in supporting Ohio's libraries. For our library, the PLF accounted for 40% of our revenue last year. Other libraries depend solely on the PLF. This support is essential to the services we provide, and it demonstrates Ohio's commitment to education.

While libraries offer a wide range of services to our communities, we remain committed to education and the development of lifelong learners. We understand that the educated citizenry will only make our State stronger and more prosperous. In the time I have with you today, I would like to quickly highlight some of the educational initiatives we have undertaken at the Community Library in Sunbury.

Like most libraries, we have a robust schedule of programs for preschool children. These programs are primarily in the form of storytimes, where children listen to stories, sing songs, and do activities. We place a strong emphasis on literacy in these programs, incorporating letter recognition, phonetic awareness, and word families, ensuring children are exposed to these crucial building blocks of reading.

Recognizing that early development encompasses more than just language, our preschool programs also integrate fundamental math concepts. Through engaging activities, young children explore counting, pattern identification, and geometric shapes, laying a solid groundwork for their future formal education.

We also offer a variety of programs to continue this education beyond the preschool level. We have a close relationship with our local school district, Big Walnut Schools. We have almost 200 class visits to the library each school year. We work with the teachers to develop programs that supplement learning in the classroom. For example, one class was covering a unit on nocturnal animals. We



Community Library

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had the kids try to solve puzzles using senses other than their sight. Following the program, students then selected books from our collection to borrow.

Our community also has a large population of homeschooling families. They depend heavily on our collection to supplement their studies. We also offer regular monthly programs for these students. In one homeschool program, after being read a book about earthquakes, students built structures out of marshmallows and toothpicks following specific guidelines. We then simulated an earthquake using a tray of Jello as the base to see what structures could withstand the force.

Programming for teens can be more challenging, because they are much busier with work and extracurricular activities. However, we have had great success with book clubs offered for teens in partnership with the school district. We also have writing workshops and coding clubs that we host at the library regularly.

Beyond structured programs, our library provides essential resources for independent learning. Our three study rooms are consistently in high demand, offering a quiet environment for students to meet with tutors after school and throughout the summer. We also use these rooms to proctor exams for remote learners. The fact that use of these rooms has increased 43% in the last three years, coupled with the fact that they are frequently booked, speaks volumes about the importance our community places on such academic support.

As you can see, education is critical to the mission of our library, as well as every library in the State. The partnership Ohio's libraries have with the State helps make these programs and services possible. By the State dedicating a percentage of its revenue to the PLF, libraries are provided the support they need to continue such services.

I urge the Senate to maintain Governor DeWine's proposal to increase the PLF to 1.75% of the GRF. This dedicated funding ensures that Ohio's libraries can continue to serve as vital educational institutions, empowering individuals, improving our communities, and strengthening our State.

Thank you for your work on the biennial budget and for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.



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