



**Senate Education Committee
House Finance Committee
House Bill 96 Testimony
May 12, 2025**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill (HB) 96 on behalf of Ohio's public libraries.

My name is Anastasia Diamond-Ortiz, the Executive Director of Lorain Public Library System, serving Lorain County. I am here today to share some examples of the broad array of educational offerings provided by our public library to the community. More specifically, I want to speak about the programs and services targeted at our youngest community members, starting with our high-dosage tutoring program, Level Up.

Level Up Tutoring Program

The Lorain Public Library System's Level Up Tutoring Program offers free, high-quality tutoring and homework help to students in kindergarten through eighth grade who live in the City of Lorain. Designed to boost academic success, this program goes above and beyond traditional models by providing 80 hours of tutoring over 32 weeks, well above the national standard of 50 hours over 36 weeks.

Using a high-dosage tutoring model proven to deliver real results, students meet in small, mixed-grade groups with a dedicated tutor in a 1-to-4 ratio, for 75-minute sessions at least twice a week. LPLS actively recruits both current and retired educators to serve as tutors. This format allows for personalized attention and builds strong learning relationships.

Each student receives customized support in reading and literacy, homework help, and hands-on enrichment activities that spark curiosity, creativity, and confidence. Following best practices in education, Level Up Tutoring is rooted in inquiry-based learning that keeps students engaged and motivated.

Why does it matter? Research from the National Bureau of Economic Research shows that high-dosage tutoring is up to 15 times more effective in improving reading skills—and up to 20 times more effective in math—than standard tutoring approaches.

Level Up isn't just help with homework—it's a game-changer for young learners in Lorain.

The Level Up Tutoring program supports students across various academic settings: 58.88% of participants attend local public schools, 40.38% are enrolled in charter or parochial schools, and the remaining students attend an online public school. Thus far in the 2024/2025 school year, the Level Up Tutoring program has provided 2,639.75 hours of high-dosage tutoring, homework support, and enrichment activities to 91 unduplicated students residing in Lorain, Ohio, throughout the 2024 -2025 school year. Thanks to their participation in the Level Up Tutoring program, DESSA assessments revealed that an impressive 94.5% of students were on track or above average in key areas such as personal responsibility, optimistic thinking, goal-directed behavior, social awareness, decision-making, relationship skills, self-awareness, and self-management.

88% of surveyed caregivers reported that Level Up Tutoring helped students to improve and gain confidence with fundamental literacy skills, including decoding, language comprehension, background knowledge, language structure, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. Moreover, 100% of surveyed caregivers report that the Level Up Tutoring Program improved their children's grades, addressed their students' individualized needs, and is a vital need in the community.

Early Literacy Offerings

At the Lorain Public Library System, story time is more than just reading books—it's a carefully designed experience that builds the foundation for lifelong learning. Each session is rooted in early literacy principles and aligns with the science of reading, which emphasizes phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and oral language skills. Through songs, rhymes, movement, and interactive reading, children engage multiple senses, helping them develop the cognitive skills critical for school readiness.

Story time also empowers caregivers as skilled librarians model strategies that caregivers can use at home to support their child's learning. Librarians introduce age-appropriate books and activities that promote letter recognition, print awareness, and comprehension, all essential components of literacy development. By fostering a love of reading and creating a language-rich environment, the Lorain Public Library System equips young children with the tools they need to become confident, curious, and capable learners from the very start.

The Lorain Public Library System is committed to expanding its outreach efforts by building strong partnerships with childcare centers, preschools, local schools and other community groups to bring story time and educational programs directly to students. By embracing a "meet them where they are" approach, LPLS is working to remove barriers to access and ensure that all children—regardless of location or circumstance—can benefit from high-quality early literacy experiences.

In addition, the Lorain Public Library System offers a wide range of educational resources designed to support early and emerging literacy as well as academic success. These

include early literacy backpacks and science and wellness kits—each providing interactive, hands-on learning experiences for families. LPLS also provides Launchpads, which are secure, preloaded educational tablets featuring content and games for users of all ages that do not require a Wi-Fi connection. Topics covered include literacy, math, science, art, and social skills.

LPLS offers an extensive Readalong collection—print books that include built-in audiobooks—allowing readers to follow along as they listen. Both Launchpads and Readalongs expose children to new vocabulary, model fluent reading, and enhance engagement with reading and writing. These resources help build listening skills, attention span, and reading confidence, while also supporting language development, comprehension, and critical thinking—ultimately nurturing a lifelong love of reading.

A public library plays a vital role in supporting different learning needs by offering resources in a variety of formats—books, audiobooks, digital tools, and hands-on kits—ensuring that all patrons can learn in ways that suit their individual styles. By embracing multiple formats, LPLS fosters accessible and engaging learning experiences for every age and ability.

Homeschool Resources

The Lorain Public Library System recognizes the growing homeschool community and is committed to supporting homeschooling families through a wide range of programs and resources that enhance both educational outcomes and social development. From hands-on STEM workshops and literacy-rich story times to arts, history, and cultural programs, LPLS offers engaging opportunities for homeschool students to explore new subjects, strengthen critical thinking skills, and experience creative, inquiry-based learning.

In addition to academic enrichment, these programs provide essential opportunities for socialization, allowing children to interact with peers, collaborate on group projects, and form meaningful friendships in a welcoming and supportive environment. The library's robust collection of print and digital resources—including books, audiobooks, educational kits, Launchpads, online databases, and curriculum-aligned platforms—serves as a valuable toolkit for homeschool families. These resources support personalized learning across all grade levels and subjects, empowering parents and caregivers to tailor instruction to meet their children's unique learning styles and interests.

Adapted Program Offerings

Since 2016, the Lorain Public Library System has proudly offered adapted programs designed to meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families. Recognizing that traditional story times and programs may not fully support or reflect the different abilities of our community's children, LPLS created these programs to ensure every family feels welcome, supported, and celebrated. Many parents of children with disabilities express

hesitation in attending standard library events due to concerns that their child may be disruptive or misunderstood. Adapted programs offer a safe, judgment-free space where children can fully participate at their own pace and in their own way—encouraging self-expression, engagement, and confidence. These programs are intentionally structured to reduce sensory overload, accommodate a range of needs, and foster a supportive environment for both children and caregivers.

Libraries have long served as trusted, accessible community hubs, and the Lorain Public Library System embraces this role by going beyond books to provide meaningful connection and support. Story time is often a child's first group activity, and library staff are frequently among the first to hear concerns from caregivers about a child's development. LPLS not only provides early literacy and enrichment experiences through its adapted programming but also connects families with local agencies and nonprofits that specialize in developmental support. The Lorain Public Library System partners with local agencies to offer free developmental screenings and parenting classes led by industry experts on a variety of topics, including bedtime routines, nutrition, potty training, speech development, school readiness, and managing separation anxiety. By offering these vital services and acting as a bridge to broader community resources, LPLS ensures that all families—regardless of ability—have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive together.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Ohio's public libraries. Without the partnership with the state and your support for the Public Library Fund, many of these great programs offered by our public libraries wouldn't be possible.