

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Steph Stump. I am a proud resident of Berlin Township in Delaware, Ohio; I work as a fellowship program coordinator at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center; and I am a doctoral student with a diverse academic background, holding a bachelor's degree in history and two master's degrees in higher education administration and public administration. I have relied on our local public libraries not only as an invaluable resource in my research but as a sanctuary that bolsters my mental and emotional well-being.

I still remember a time during a challenging phase of one of my research projects when I felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information I needed to synthesize for my project. In that moment, the quiet refuge of the public library offered me clarity, a space where dedicated staff helped me uncover rare texts and navigate complex archival materials. That experience not only saved my research but reinvigorated my commitment to lifelong learning. This personal journey is a testament to the transformative power these libraries hold for individuals from all walks of life.

Beyond my own story, the impact of public libraries resonates throughout our community. Libraries serve as vibrant centers for education, offering digital access, literacy programs, and career resources to people of all ages—from young students to seniors seeking new opportunities. In 2023, Ohio's public libraries saw tens of millions of visits, underscoring their essential role in fostering community health and personal growth. Such impressive numbers illuminate the broader societal benefits that are at stake.

Given my firsthand experience and professional insights into the pivotal role that libraries play in both advancing education and enhancing community well-being, I respectfully urge the committee to restore the Public Library Fund to at least a fixed 1.7% of state revenue. This funding is not merely a budgetary allocation—it is a steadfast commitment to preserving the backbone of our educational and civic infrastructure. I implore you to take immediate action to protect an institution that empowers countless citizens, fuels academic inquiry, and transforms lives every day.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I ask you to consider my testimony with the urgency it deserves and take decisive steps to invest in the future of our community through the restoration of the Public Library Fund. Together, we can secure a brighter, more informed tomorrow for all Ohioans.

Sincerely,  
Steph Stump