

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 Allison Volz. I am a school librarian, lifelong resident of Ohio, and a frequent user of the Columbus Metropolitan Library. I am writing to urge the committee to restore the Public Library Fund to AT LEAST a fixed 1.7% of state revenue (the current amount).

According to the American Library Association, Ohio is home to some of the largest library systems in the country: Cincinnati & Hamilton County (2nd), Dayton (7th), Cleveland (14th) and Cuyahoga County (15th). Ohio consistently ranks at or near the top for public library usage, visits, and circulation per capita with multiple library systems ranking in the top 10 in the country when it comes to circulation: Cincinnati & Hamilton County (2nd), Cuyahoga County (6th), Columbus Metropolitan (7th). This is not by chance—it's because our libraries are well-run, innovative, and deeply embedded in the lives of the people they serve. They are a cornerstone of lifelong learning, offering equitable access to knowledge, technology, and essential services for residents of all ages and backgrounds.

As a school librarian, I witness firsthand the vital role that public libraries play not just in the education of our children but in the overall well-being of our communities. Many of my students rely on the library for summer meals and frequently utilize neighborhood branches as safe places to go after school. While I work every day to support student learning within the walls of my school, I rely deeply on the services provided by our local public libraries to extend learning beyond the classroom.

Ohio's public libraries are among the best in the nation. In fact, Public libraries are much more than books. They provide:

- **Free access to technology and the internet**, crucial for families who do not have reliable broadband at home.
- **Early literacy programs**, such as story times and summer reading challenges, that build the foundation for school readiness and combat learning loss.
- **Homework help and tutoring**, particularly for students who might otherwise fall behind.
- **Job search resources and workforce training**, helping adults reenter the workforce and build new skills.
- **Safe, welcoming spaces** for teens and children after school, where they can engage in creative programs and supervised activities.
- **Support for seniors and marginalized populations**, through outreach services, digital literacy instruction, and connections to social services.

Yet, for all they provide, Ohio's public libraries are facing increasing costs and growing community demands. Funding below the 1.7% threshold would limit hours, reduce staffing, and cut vital services—directly harming those who rely on libraries the most. Especially in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, the local public library may be the only access point to books, technology, and educational support.

Ohio's investment in its public libraries is one of its greatest assets. By ensuring a minimum of 1.7% of state revenue is dedicated to library funding, we uphold a legacy of excellence and maintain critical services that touch the lives of every Ohioan.

On behalf of my students, their families, and communities across our state, I urge you to protect and strengthen this funding. Public libraries are not a luxury—they are an educational necessity and a pillar of civic life.

I ask you to consider my testimony and restore the Public Library Fund to AT LEAST a fixed 1.7% of state revenue.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's future.

Sincerely,  
Allison J. Volz