

Prepared Testimony of Sean Lee Litteral  
Before the Ohio Senate Education Committee  
5th Informal Hearing Am. Sub. H.B. No. 96 – Public Libraries  
May 12, 2025

Chairman Brenner, Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Sean Lee Litteral and I am honored to share a few words with you regarding public libraries. I grew up not more than a 15-minute walk west of this very room in an affordable housing development called South Park Apartments. I remember walking these halls as a youngster, meeting Governor Bob Taft and taking in the aura of this incredible public institution.

The same respect and admiration that I held and hold for this Statehouse is reflected in my love for public libraries, those living artifacts, windows to the soul of communities, that serve as a beacon, refuge, and place of freedom for so many. More than a composite of Ohio's beautiful red bricks, smooth electricity, and pristine water, libraries are home to mentors, teachers, and holders of the light, helping us all to find and discover ourselves and the world.

As leaders of this great State, the Atlas-ian task of balancing interests and the budget falls on your shoulders. This is a role that I know every single one of you takes seriously. In balancing those interests, there are few line items that serve as many disparate and meaningful interests as public libraries:

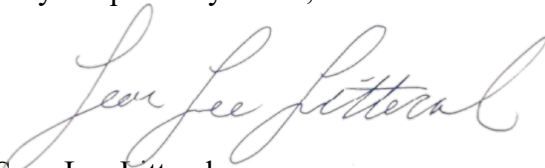
- I have seen first-hand how libraries can help to keep people out of the streets, focused on their growth and facilitating community-mindedness, saving tax payers significant sums;
- The existence of public libraries can, in some cases, serve as substitutes for costly “wrap around” services at public schools, providing for relatively affordable structured environments for children after school and on the weekends, netting additional savings;
- Many of Ohio's public libraries focus on programming, providing current and incoming residents with activities throughout the month, helping to preserve Ohio's impressive history and providing the kindling for more such achievement, constituting a safe and reliable investment;
- The existence of public libraries may help Ohio's growing businesses attract talent as well-supported cultural institutions likely factors into candidates' decisions to take on opportunities, amounting to a safe and reliable investment;
- Libraries hold enormous importance for Ohio's Senior Citizens, many of whom spend their mornings or afternoons at their local libraries, thus helping to keep Seniors engaged and connected, creating savings, and amounting to an essential public investment;
- Many of Ohio's Small Businesses turn to their local libraries for resources, programming, and materials, giving them access to databases of knowledge, facilitating networking, and aiding their growth, amounting to an important, safe, and reliable investment.

These benefits and others may be at risk should the Legislature decide to alter the distribution formula for public library funding. In turn, a public library faced with a reduced budget may consider eliminating programming for Senior Citizens or Small Businesses, reducing its workforce, or shuttering its hours. Such important interests should not be pitted against one another, nor should Ohio's savings and investments. All can be served through Ohio's public libraries.

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Once again, thank you very much Chairman Brenner and Members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today. I wish you the best of luck in your important tasks ahead.

Very Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sean Lee Litteral". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sean Lee Litteral