

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

You asked the State Librarian recently about how many public libraries don't have local levies to offset their state budgets. There are 48 Ohio public libraries with no levies, largely because their rural populations cannot afford them. They include libraries in the districts of Senators Brenner, Cutrona, and Huffman from this Committee. I encourage you to visit your constituent libraries, partner with them, and ask them about their services. I would also recommend two films for you, available now on PBS, called "Free for All: The Public Library" and "Library Stories: Books on the Backroads," both of which explain how libraries of all sizes strive to meet community needs and interests.

One other subject I feel must be addressed, and that is the mandate on page 2274 of the House Bill 96 budget proposal:

Sec. 3375.47. A public library created under Chapter 3375. of the Revised Code shall place material related to sexual orientation or gender identity or expression in a portion of the public library that is not primarily open to the view of persons under the age of eighteen.

This mandate would force local libraries to move or remove any mention of LGBTQ+ people, any gender expression such as boys "acting like boys," and many child and teen biographies, literary fiction, romance, history, and age-appropriate sex education. In Idaho, a similar law forced at least one library to close to children, as it could not isolate its adult collection away from the children's section. In North Dakota, the governor rightly vetoed a similar bill. This mandate would be very costly, forcing librarians to sift through their collections to find these books and perhaps remove taxpayer-funded books. It is also hurtful, telling certain minority communities that they should not be read about. It is also unconstitutional, having already been adjudicated in *Sund v. Wichita Falls* in the year 2000, when two children's books about kids with gay parents were relegated to the adult section of the library. These books aren't "sexual," they simply say that same-sex parents exist.

Libraries give a great return on taxpayer investment, delivering \$4.00 of value for every tax dollar spent; but just as when your offices help a person who has been denied vital care, it isn't only about the numbers of people served, but of the

priceless value you give. Libraries provide lifelong education, and sometimes, they change lives. Please restore funding for public libraries to the Governor's proposal of 1.75%, and remove the mandate to move or remove certain books for minors