

Senate Finance Committee

Sub. H.B. 96 Interested Party Written Testimony from Maureen Fellingner

June 5, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony on the Senate's proposal for the FY26–FY27 state operating budget.

My name is Maureen Fellingner, and I am the Digital Resources Specialist at the Franklin-Springboro Public Library. I am writing to you not only as a dedicated library professional, but as someone who witnesses every day the critical role that public libraries play in the lives of Ohioans. I urge you to support the full restoration and protection of the Public Library Fund (PLF), as outlined in Governor DeWine's initial budget proposal.

Governor DeWine's proposal to maintain the PLF at 1.75% of the General Revenue Fund recognizes the vital importance of libraries in every corner of our state. Libraries serve as trusted, nonpartisan institutions that provide access to essential services: job search support, literacy programs, early childhood education, digital access, and safe community spaces for people of all ages. Any reduction in funding compromises our ability to meet the increasing demand for these services.

Ohio's public libraries are among the busiest in the nation per capita-- and for good reason. We do far more than lend books. We are one of the few remaining public institutions where people can access resources and community support freely, regardless of income or background. Maintaining strong funding ensures that all Ohioans-- especially in rural and underserved areas-- continue to have access to education, technology, and community programs that improve lives.

I also want to express concern over the provision in the budget proposal regarding moving materials related to sexual orientation or gender identity or expression to adults-only sections. This is not only deeply troubling but also counter to the very principles of intellectual freedom, inclusivity, and accessibility that libraries uphold. Every youth, every family, and every ally deserves to see their identities reflected and respected on public shelves. Segregating materials based on content that reflects real people and real experiences sets a dangerous precedent, stigmatizes these communities, and undermines the rights of young people to seek information.

As someone who works directly with library patrons every day, I see how deeply our collections and services touch lives. Whether it's a parent finding support, a teen feeling seen for the first time in a book, or an elder using a computer to reconnect with loved ones-- we are here for everyone.

I hope you will advocate for Ohio's libraries by supporting the PLF funding and by standing against efforts that undermine access to diverse, inclusive materials. Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration.