



**Senate Finance Committee  
House Bill 96  
Interested Party Testimony  
June 5, 2025**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Senate's proposal for the FY26-FY27 state operating budget.

My name is Anastasia Diamond-Ortiz, the Executive Director of Lorain Public Library System, serving Lorain County. We serve roughly half of Lorain County's growing population and operate library branches in Avon, Columbia Township, Lorain, North Ridgeville and Sheffield Lake.

Our communities in Lorain County support their libraries, locally and at the state level. Your constituents appreciate that they can depend on us at every stage of life and in times of need. As access to information becomes more fragmented and locked behind paywalls or in AI models, we are still a place where they can see their tax dollars at work and know their investments are paying dividends.

I am testifying today out of concern about the impact of the Senate's proposal on the ability of libraries like ours to provide the services that our community expects. The current proposal takes over \$10 million from the Public Library Fund and funds state agencies at the expense of public libraries. In addition, the current proposal takes away the ability to ask for a replacement levy and, further, would allow the County Budget Commission to disenfranchise citizens who have provided their support in the most democratic way possible, by voting.

Voters in Lorain County pass public library levies with a high success rate. We ask them to renew their support for their library at the ballot box as a way to ensure that we are providing what they want. We regularly check in to be sure we are responsive to community needs, be that more storytimes in communities like Avon and North Ridgeville that are growing fast or programming for seniors in communities like Columbia Township that do not have a senior center. We have been successful in those efforts because what public libraries provide is something unique that no one else does, a free place to learn without expectation of any political or social agenda. Everyone is welcome. We simply want to keep providing those services to our

community who has invested in them. **We are respectfully asking the Senate to remove the provision allowing the County Budget Commission to undermine the will of local voters and restore the ability of political subdivisions to propose replacement levies. Eliminate the \$10.2 million deduction from the PLF for multiple state agencies. These entities should be funded directly from the GRF.**

Public Libraries serve everyone in the community. It has been that way as long as public libraries have existed. We believe strongly that parents are a child's first teacher and the ones who understand best what is appropriate for their children. We provide hundreds of storytime programs every year where young children learn and, hopefully, will develop into strong readers. The proposed language strips the rights of parents to determine what their children can and will read. It is antithetical to the idea of parental choice. Further, it contradicts something we in Ohio hold dear, the principle of local control. **We are respectfully asking the Senate to remove the provisions related to library materials. We feel parents know what is best for their children and consider this an unfunded mandate.**

Thank you for your time and work on this important legislation.