



KEEP OHIO'S LIBRARIES STRONG

Written testimony to Senate Finance Committee for June 5, 2025

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Jason Kucsma and I am the Executive Director/Fiscal Officer of the National Medal Award-Winning Toledo Lucas County Public Library (TLCPL).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Sub. H 96 FY26-27 State Budget Bill - Senate version. As we work together to make Ohio the most competitive, business-friendly state in the nation, a continued strong partnership between state legislators and public libraries is essential. To ensure libraries can continue to robustly serve Ohio's citizens, I respectfully ask for your consideration in making some key revisions to the bill:

1. **Please fund the PLF at the level originally proposed in the Executive Budget: \$531.7 million in FY26 and \$549.1 million in FY27.**

Ohio libraries are already working hard with budgets that have not kept pace with inflation for 25 years. Ohio's public libraries experienced a \$27 million loss in state funding in Calendar Year (CY) 2024 compared to CY 2023, resulting in libraries being funded at the same level they were 25 years ago.

While critical to library functions, the PLF is an extremely small portion of the state budget and makes up less than 0.5% of the overall budget. **For every \$1 invested in Ohio's libraries, we return \$5 in benefits.** Additionally, 7.4 million Ohio residents, or more than 60% of the state's population, hold a library card, and they use it more than any other state (outside of California). Ohio public libraries had 44.6 million visits in 2023 and saw materials borrowed or downloaded 175.7 million times.

19% of Ohio's public library systems rely solely on the PLF for their primary source of funding and DO NOT have a local property tax levy (48 of the 251). 51% of the total funding for Ohio's public libraries comes from the state through the PLF. Whether they are small, medium, large, urban, suburban, or rural, **Ohio public libraries are actively engaged in listening to and responding to community needs** with programs, services, and partnerships that put public libraries at the center of successful communities.

At Toledo Lucas County Public Library, our Small Business and Nonprofit Services Department returned \$3.1 million in valued services, training, and education to help community members start or grow a business or nonprofit organization. Not only do public libraries improve a community's quality of life, but they are also centers of economic innovation.

See more ►

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June 2025

2. Eliminate the \$10.2 million deduction from the PLF for multiple state agencies.

Sub. H 96 deducts more than \$10.2 million in each fiscal year from the PLF appropriation for the State Library, OPLIN, Library for the Blind, Regional Library Systems, and the Ohioana Library Association. This further reduces the state's investment in strong public libraries. These entities should be funded directly from the GRF, not as another component of community library funding.

3. Remove the provisions related to library materials.

Toledo Lucas County Public Library's collection of books, movies, music, television shows, and more meet community needs and interests. Our longstanding collection development policies guide us in building a collection of vetted materials that our professional staff know will resonate with the communities we serve. It is worth noting that the same policy defines a process for community members to request reconsideration of certain titles we may have in the collection. **TLCPL has received no formal requests for reconsideration for several years now.** The Senate Bill contains language that would require libraries to place materials related to sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression in a portion of the library that is not primarily open to the view of minors. Not only is this impractical, it is an expensive solution in search of a problem.

4. Remove the provision regarding County Budget Commissions as it undermines the will of local voters.

Ohio is a local control state. This provision disenfranchises and undermines the rights of local voters as it transfers authority to a county budget commission to reduce millage on any voter-approved tax levy, aside from a debt levy, if the commission finds it reasonably necessary or prudent to avoid unnecessary, excessive, or unneeded property tax collections. In many cases, there are public libraries with service areas and taxing boundaries in multiple counties. This provision could cause extreme confusion and inconsistent application of levies.

Strong public libraries help build a strong Ohio, and **we are respectfully asking for this committee's reaffirmed commitment to the 100-year partnership between Ohio libraries and the Legislature.**





SMALL BUSINESS AND NONPROFIT



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Driving economic growth for Lucas County

Training and education value:	\$404,802
+ Research services value:	\$2,407,106
+ Physical space value:	\$83,814
+ Technology and equipment:	\$234,482.22

\$3,130,204.22

in value to entrepreneurs and businesses

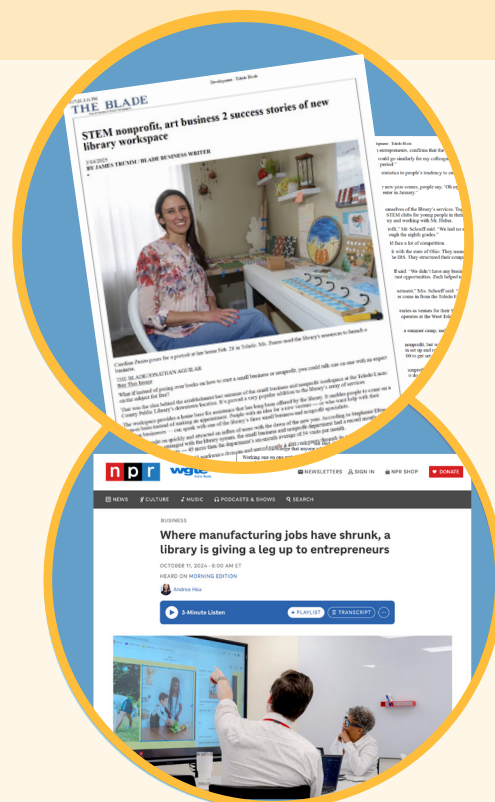
In 2024, the Small Business and Nonprofit librarians at Toledo Lucas County Public Library held 2,349 individual assistance sessions and 106 public programs.

Individual entrepreneurs, fledgling small businesses, and nonprofit organizations received help with:

- Writing business and marketing plans
- Researching their industry and competition
- Identifying potential customers and funding
- Accessing other community resources

The Small Business Team also connected these customers to other critical Library resources including:

- Unlimited public computer and WiFi access.
- Individualized technology instruction to learn about new tools and efficiencies.
- Free and convenient printing for essential documentation.
- Access and training for executive-level tools such as Mergent Intellect, Guidestar, and Plunkett Research.
- Personalized help selecting books, magazines, and articles that support their organization's mission.



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