

**House Finance Committee
Sub. HB 49 Testimony
April 27, 2017**

**Thomas Adkins, Director
Garnet A. Wilson Public Library – Waverly, Ohio**

Good morning, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Thomas Adkins and I am the Director of the Garnet A. Wilson Public Library of Pike County in Waverly, Ohio. It is a pleasure to testify today.

My colleagues and I are here on behalf of the Ohio Library Council and Ohio's 251 public libraries. We are here to share with you the difficulty libraries have had regarding recent drops in revenue – and what further funding cuts will mean to the 8.7 million Ohio residents who rely on our services, particularly in difficult times.

In difficult economic times, people rely more heavily on their libraries for basic services, computers, and internet services including Wi-Fi. And they count on libraries to assist with resume writing, completing job applications (most of which now require an online application process), and for job searches. Libraries also supply technical support to those unfamiliar with internet and online services.

I very much respect the House's recognition of the opioid addiction in our state. But perhaps you did not know that the agencies who serve those addicted to drugs and alcohol rely on public libraries in their mission to get their clients clean. At the four libraries in Pike County, the clients of resident drug rehabilitation centers visit our facilities on a daily basis to access special collections purchased in conjunction with the Recovery Council in Pike County. These materials were chosen to provide support and

inspiration to those addicted to drugs and alcohol. We have both collections that can be checked out and materials that can be used in-house. Our libraries have also set up links to websites to help those addicted in their struggles to conquer their drug habits.

Further reductions to our state funding, through the proposed reduction of the Public Library Fund (PLF), can only result in a reduction in services. Libraries will lose vital funding that we use to update purchased materials to assist our Recovery Council professionals in dealing with the opioid addiction crisis. Libraries will lose funding to update computers, data lines, and Wi-Fi connections used by our patrons to apply for jobs, for unemployment benefits, and to develop and submit resumes to potential employers. Libraries will lose essential funding to help patrons with their research needs and assist them with questions about computers, tablets, smart phones, and internet searching. And libraries will lose funding to keep our doors open longer hours in evenings and on weekends, when working people need us the most.

Cuts to funding make it especially difficult on libraries in my area of the state, southeast Ohio. Many of these libraries do not have a local property tax levy and rely solely on the Public Library Fund from the state for their operations. In particular, four of the six library systems in Chairman Smith's district rely solely on state funding through the PLF to deliver services to Ohioans. I strongly urge you to not cut state funding to Ohio's public libraries by reducing the Public Library Fund from its current percentage of 1.7% to 1.66% of the state's General Revenue Fund (GRF). Thank you for your time.