

Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Scott Oelslager, Chairman  
FY 2018-19 Budget Testimony – HB 49  
Testimony from Brianna McGuire, River Valley High School graduate  
*June 1, 2017*

Chairman Oelslager and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Brianna McGuire and I just graduated from River Valley High School in Gallia County. I have been participating in the National History Day competition for the past seven years and in a little over a week, I will be representing the great state of Ohio at the National Contest in College Park, Maryland for the fifth time. If you were to ask my friends and family about my interests, History Day is bound to be mentioned. On my letter jacket, my varsity letters are accompanied by four gold pins representing each of my trips to the National History Day contest. This program is organized and staffed by the Ohio History Connection whose state budget is now under your consideration. I hope you will consider the impact that the work they do has on schools in my area and students like myself.

At the national contest I have had the opportunity to compete against 3,000 students from all 50 states, Washington D.C., American Samoa, Central America, China, Guam, Korea, and Puerto Rico. Growing up in Gallipolis, a small town in Southeastern Ohio, I rarely encounter individuals or experience competition outside of my community. The national contest has allowed me to experience a wide variety of people and cultures that I do not have the opportunity to encounter on a regular basis and compete at a caliber that cannot be matched. It is truly an experience like no other. Each year, students personally select a topic that corresponds with the annual National History Day theme. Students are able to create either a display board, paper, website, documentary, or performance to display the research of their chosen topic. The project typically carries throughout the school year and requires intensive research, writing, critical thinking, and creativity. The program is clearly massive now, as it is a worldwide program and recipient of the 2011 National Humanities Medal. The first History Day contest was even held in Cleveland, Ohio in 1974. History Day is a home-grown Ohio tradition.

My experience with National History Day has been extracurricular, however, some teachers choose to implement National History Day into their classroom curriculum. For approximately four years, my education in the history classroom was sub-par. The History Day program helped to fill the gaps in my education and not only maintain, but grow my interest in history. My school requires each senior to complete a capstone project that includes a research paper, a presentation, and an applied product. While many of my peers struggled learning to conduct proper research and accurately cite sources, I was able to complete these tasks with ease due to my experience with History Day. I chose to focus my capstone project on the lack of history educational opportunities and experiences for students. Through my research I learned that based on the U.S. Department of Education's 2015 publication of the Nation's Report Card focused on grades four, eight, and twelve, the subject with the lowest rate of proficiency was United State History. Only 12% of seniors across the country tested at or above proficient in United States History. Though I do not want to bore you with statistics, this number was especially alarming to me. I do not want to grow up in a generation that is unaware of our nation's history. I decided to address this problem in the best way I knew by beginning a History Day mentoring program to encourage the program in my local middle school. It was great to see the students grow in confidence and understanding through the History Day competition. Studying history may not be the

“cool” thing to do in middle school, but 100% of the students agreed that they would recommend the History Day program to a friend when surveyed for my capstone project.

I cannot emphasize enough how the History Day program has affected my personal growth. Outside of academics, National History Day has helped me to become more confident in my public speaking abilities. I would not have the confidence to speak in front of you today if I had not been given the opportunity to mature in the National History Day program. I grew up incredibly shy. I was even afraid to call my grandma on the telephone. Because of my experience with the National History Day program, I actually enjoy public speaking and was even given the opportunity to perform as the lead in my school’s annual musical. The National History Day program has recently provided me with an opportunity to work as one of eight students across the nation in partnership with the National WWII Museum as a student ambassador. Throughout the 2017 calendar year, I will be interviewing local WWII veterans for the museum’s permanent digital collection in order to preserve both local and national history. Additionally, History Day has allowed me to meet new friends from across the state and across the nation. Living in such a small rural area, it is safe to say that I would not have been given these opportunities without National History Day program. The National History Day program has expanded my interest in the possibility of pursuing a history related career and has given me confidence entering college in the fall. I hope that you will consider expanding the National History Day program to enrich the education of students across the state. It is well known that a strong education, including a solid foundation history, is crucial to preserving our democracy. I hope that my generation and generations to follow will obtain the proper knowledge to carry out strong roles as American citizens. Though my words will never be able to do the National History Day program justice, I hope that I have been able to offer a bit of insight into the benefits of the program and its positive effects on my life.

Thank you for letting me share my Ohio History Day experiences with you. I hope you will remember my story and the important work that the Ohio History Connection does when you complete your work on this state budget. I’d be happy to answer any questions you have of me.

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