

Jackson Local Schools

Striving for Excellence



Good Morning, Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Minority member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance committee. Thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns today.

We are grateful that H.B.49 contains an amendment to restore INFOhio's funding to 2015 levels. Through advocacy efforts and the House's diligence in responding to its constituents, we are on the right track to ensure that all Ohio PreK-12 students have equitable access to quality digital resources, which is INFOhio's main mission. We are equally grateful that this committee is thoughtfully considering this worthy cause.

My name is Christina Conti, and I have been an educator for 24 years, first as an English and Social Studies teacher, and now as a high school librarian at Jackson High School. I am on the front lines of information and digital literacy efforts on a daily basis. We all want our students to think critically about the sources they use and the information they digest. This is an essential 21st century skill; this is what you tell us, this is what the business community tells us, and this is what every educator works to achieve with his or her students every day. Without learning tools like the Bookflix collection of eBooks for PreK-3 and the EBSCO databases of thousands of magazines, journals and newspapers, there is simply no other service that provides students with the necessary resources to accomplish this task at a statewide level as INFOhio.

The following story is just one that illustrates the urgent need to maintain INFOhio's resources. Two years ago, I was with a class of freshmen, researching leaders of the Civil Rights Era. In the first page of results on a Google search of Martin Luther King, Jr., students had visited a website that at first glance looked legitimate. In reality, the website was maintained by a white supremacist group, whose mission was to malign the civil rights leader and spread a hateful message. After seeing this, I was able to direct those students to EBSCO's Biography Reference Bank, where they could be assured the information they found would be accurate and authoritative.

Because my students have INFOhio resources, they are becoming more prepared for college and beyond. Students without access to databases are at a major disadvantage. When left to their own devices – and, without the benefit of INFOhio resources – many students will visit sites like Wikipedia for research information that is unreliable, mistaken, or just plain false. Unfortunately, we really don't have to look hard for examples like this. In preparation for this testimony, I conducted my own search for the

“Ohio General Assembly.” Like a good librarian, I carefully perused all the results. One of the first is Wikipedia’s page about the Assembly. In the first line, it states that the Assembly is currently in its 131st session. Since you’ve been involved in it for several months now, I’m sure all of you here can tell me that you’re actually in the 132nd session of the esteemed Ohio General Assembly...

I recently spoke with one of Jackson High School’s former graduates. He graduated from Walsh

University and is pursuing his Master’s degree at John Carrol University. When I talked with him about today, he told me he’d be happy to vouch for his experience with INFOhio’s research tools. Exposure to and experience with databases in high school like EBSCO more than prepared him for the world of college research.

It can be a challenge to encourage our students to use the databases, just as it can be a challenge to get them to eat broccoli, or read Shakespeare, or to memorize and apply the quadratic formula. But, it is nearly impossible in the vast world of the web, to teach our students to be information, media, and digital literates without access to vital research tools that are provided through INFOhio.

On a final note, I would like to mention that as a member of INFOhio's Advisory Board for the past two years, I have been privileged to witness and work with INFOhio's amazing group of dedicated professionals. I'm confident that if you could spend one meeting with INFOhio's Executive Committee or Advisory Board, you would see what is best about education in the great state of Ohio; every move they make has students' best interests squarely in their focus. They are excellent stewards of state funds.

I join thousands of Ohioans in asking you to restore INFOhio's funding. It is a vital educational resource.

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Minority Member Skindell, and members of Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of continued full funding for INFOhio’s Digital Resources.

BOARD OF EDUCATION OFFICE
7602 Fulton Drive NW, Massillon, OH 44646
Superintendent – (330) BJO-Booo • Treasurer (330) B3o-Boo2

JACKSONMEMORIAL HIGHSCHOOL
7355 Mudbrook St. N.W. Massillon, Ohio 44646
1330) 830-.8034