



May 31, 2017
Metropolitan Libraries of Ohio
Written Testimony to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Ohio’s public libraries. The Metropolitan Libraries of Ohio represent eight of the largest public library systems in the state. Through innovative approaches, the Metropolitan Libraries of Ohio fill a critical need in addressing those issues the Ohio Legislature and Ohio’s citizens continue to prioritize. In addition, the libraries continue to offer widespread access to information, technology and educational resources for 60% of Ohio’s citizens. Our library systems are instrumental in fostering and facilitating lifelong learning through workforce development initiatives, early childhood education programs, and community partnerships. We respectfully request the Ohio Senate restore public library funding to last biennium levels of 1.7 percent of the General Revenue Fund.

Below are a few of the many ways in which the Metropolitan Libraries positively impact communities throughout Ohio.

Early Childhood Education and Development

Babies are born ready to learn. The Dayton Metro Library helps new parents take advantage of this critical period of development through its Love Them Out Loud program. Distributed through doctor's offices, WIC clinics, and parent educators in the community, Love Them Out Loud boxes offer hours of learning activities for parents and their babies to share. Through this program, the library supports parents with the resources they need to start building the foundation for a lifetime of learning. The box includes a board book designed to introduce babies to rhymes and colorful illustrations, suggesting learning activities parents can engage in with their children every day.

Opiate Crisis Response

Stark County District Library partners with Stark Mental Health and Addiction Recovery agency to provide information about and access to recovery services in the community. The library serves as a community “living room” for people struggling to renew their will to thrive. Those Ohioans struggling with addiction or recovering from addiction come to the library to find a job, connect to mental health services, learn how to parent, and learn skills that increase their options for employment.

Workforce Development

The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County launched a series of job and career readiness workshops to provide citizens with the resources they need to contribute to a growing Ohio work force. In partnership with Ohio Means Jobs, the library launched the Find Your Future Career Workshop Series at several branches. These two entities also collaborated with Job and Family Services and several community/government agencies to add workshops focused on

“Breaking Barriers.” The Breaking Barriers series provides those with criminal records information on how to overcome barriers associated with employment.

Small Business and Economic Support

Small business owners and those looking to start a small business receive individualized help from the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County’s Book a BIZ Librarian sessions. Book a BIZ Librarian sessions have nearly doubled in 2016. When Ohio businesses have questions, they are increasingly using the libraries to find the answers and additional business knowledge. The Business and Investment Center at the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County is one of the top public library resources for business in the country.

Community Support

Assets Toledo, a non-profit organization, provides its students with experience-based training to start or expand a small business. Its curriculum includes classes in the Toledo Lucas County Public Library Business Technology Department with the Library’s Business Technology Specialist. The partnership between Assets Toledo and the Toledo Lucas County Public Library has provided economic independence and new job creation to the region. Many students return to the library to use the resources, business software, or work with a librarian to fine tune ideas and research to propel their businesses to success.

Job Search Assistance

Cuyahoga County Public Library’s (“CCPL”) CuyahogaWorks job and career services helps jobseekers at the library through one-on-one counseling, resume writing and interview prep. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents indicated that CuyahogaWorks helped them gain employment and 68% reported that they secured work within three months of participating in a library program. Going forward, CCPL is expanding its collaboration with Cuyahoga County’s Department of Health & Human Services to align workforce development with community initiatives designed to drive regional growth, economic opportunity and individual well-being.

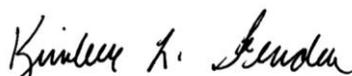
Immigrant and Refugee Services

In partnership with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) the Cleveland Public Library hosts a two-part program that combines ESOL courses with early literacy services for new mothers. Families meet weekly at the library to discuss relevant topics such as women’s health and adjusting to life in the U.S. Following each discussion, the women participate in a variety of domestic skill-building classes including sewing, knitting and cooking, as well as story times and early-childhood literacy information sessions.

Investing in the Community

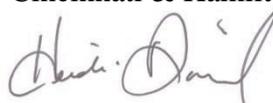
The Columbus, Cuyahoga and Dayton library systems have recently invested in replacing outdated and undersized library branches with innovative new buildings that offer 21st-century library services to foster lifelong learning in people of all ages. These new branches would not be possible without the critical Public Library Fund. Operating dollars from the PLF served as the bonding mechanism to provide the funding to build these new branches in often-underserved neighborhoods.

For so many Ohioans, the library is the one place where they can go to learn, start a business, receive crucial health and wellness services, begin the job search and receive workforce development support, especially when state revenues are decreasing. The Metropolitan Libraries of Ohio do so much more than check-out books. Libraries help keep Ohioans educated, healthy, safe, and prosperous. We respectfully request the Senate restore the PLF to a 1.7% of the General Revenue Fund. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee today.

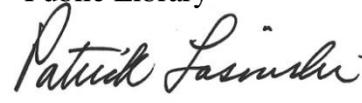

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