



February 13, 2023

The Honorable Gayle Manning
77 South High Street
11th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Good afternoon, Chair Manning, Ranking Member Jarrells, and members of the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, my name is Megan Wood and I have the privilege of serving as the Executive Director and CEO of the Ohio History Connection. I am here today to offer testimony on Governor DeWine's proposed budget and in particular the line items that involve the Ohio History Connection and our work throughout the state.

For background, the Ohio History Connection, formerly the Ohio Historical Society, is a statewide history organization with the mission to spark discovery of Ohio's stories, to embrace the present, share the past, and transform the future. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization chartered in 1885, the Ohio History Connection carries out history services for Ohio and its citizens focused on preserving and sharing the state's history. This includes housing the State Historic Preservation Office, the official state archives, educational and community outreach and managing more than 50 sites and museums across Ohio.

Today I'd like to focus on a few points of the work of the Ohio History Connection, specifically the upcoming World Heritage sites, the work of the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office, and our network of historic sites. My overall message today is that the Ohio History Connection seeks to be the historical organization that Ohioans deserve as supported by the governor's proposed budget. We can maintain and make better a site system and a set of programs that improve Ohio's communities - by bringing people together, cultivating pride, or encouraging economic development.

Governor DeWine is proposing an overall increase for line items specifically involving the Ohio History Connection by 29.2% in FY 24 and by an additional 6.8% in FY 25. I mention this because there are many line items that are underneath the Ohio History Connection that do not contribute to our operating budget and pass through to our partners or commissions that fall under our heading and also are important to Ohio history writ large- the Ohio Holocaust Commission, the American-250 in Ohio Commission, history grants that have long supported important history organizations in the state like the Western Reserve Historical Society and the Cincinnati Museum Center.

2,000 years ago, the ancestors of today's American Indian people gathered in the Ohio Valley and built massive structures from earth aligned to the cycles of the sun and the moon. The artifacts at these sites were brought from around the continent- obsidian from what know today as Yellowstone National Park, shell from the Gulf of Mexico, copper from the upper Great Lakes. Today we are privileged in Ohio to steward these remarkable places. These are globally significant sites in a nomination to be voted on by the World Heritage Committee in September that are reflected in UNESCO World Heritage Sites (360402) line item. As Governor DeWine stated in his inaugural address, "this is a big deal!" And we certainly agree with that. World Heritage designation is the highest recognition that a site can receive globally and would put our Ohio sites on the list with places like the Great Pyramid of Giza and the Roman Colosseum. We are confident that come September, Ohio will have its first World Heritage Site, the 25th World Heritage site in the nation and that it will be a big deal for our state. We look forward to welcoming the world to Ohio and the eight sites that across Licking, Ross, and Warren Counties. As for the line item, we are requesting that you add \$1.2 million to FY 24 and \$1.6 million in FY 25. Thus bringing the total to \$1.2 million in FY 24 and \$1.6 million in FY 25. This would allow us to prepare the sites for increased visitors, both from a maintenance standpoint, but also staffing and marketing purposes. The economic impact of this designation will be felt for years to come for our state, not just the World Heritage Site.

As Ohioans, we are all excited by the investments happening in our towns and communities- large and small. In Dayton, the Arcade is a project that received both state and federal Historic Preservation Tax credits and is a space that has restaurants, private event space, residential space, working space, radio broadcasts, all within the beautiful structure of a historic building that contributes to placemaking in Dayton. This is the type of work we facilitate through the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The Ohio State Historic Preservation Office has been housed in our organization since its creation. As Ohioans we can be proud of the high production and quality that comes from our SHPO. We have over 3800 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, the designation that is the first step in many programs including federal historic tax credits and our Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit (OHPTC) program.

We work on both of these projects with the National Parks Service (NPS) and they recently provided some data:

For federal FY2022, Ohio ranked #1 in the country for Part 1 applications- making the determination that a building is indeed historic, the first step in the tax credit process and also #1 in the country for Part 2 applications- where the SHPO works to get proposed worked approved by NPS. This is thanks in large part to the tremendous support historic tax credits have in Ohio, including through the OHPTC program (most of our projects apply for both the federal and state historic tax credits) and the commitment that applicants and the Ohio SHPO staff have in working together to get buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places and submitting projects to NPS that are in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and thus that can be successfully approved. These numbers show that a lot of historic buildings are being saved, recognized, and sensitively rehabilitated in Ohio.

This year, Ohio also ranked #1 in the country for total estimated Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures at \$1,386,652,810. This number represents the investment being made in historic buildings (and by extension communities) across our state.

The line item for Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (360504) which is seeing a notable increase in FY 24. The increase in FY 24 is relative to matching funds that the state is providing to our office based off what our office has received in federal dollars. NPS provides federal funding to each SHPO office, which is supposed to be a 40% state and 60% federal split. The amount in the Governor's proposed budget gets us within \$100K of meeting the match. Ohio is in the midst of great economic growth and these increased funds for the historic preservation line ensure we can quickly review and assist projects with federal funds and be of service to projects that are being developed utilizing historic preservation tax credits and the federal and state level.

Many of the line items in our budget relate to staffing, preserving, and maintaining a network of sites across the state. Line items 360501 and 360502 and are foundational for everything we do at the Ohio History Connection. A large part of these line items pays our staff that care for our collections, share history through programming, staff and maintain our vast historic site network. We recently conducted a study on salaries for our employees and the results of that study showed that there is a gap of about \$1.3 million on where we should be at in paying our staff versus where we are currently. The increases in these line items assist us in our effort to be more competitive in the market and ensure that we are able to retain and recruit talented staff to work at all our sites throughout the state and deliver memorable experiences for Ohioans of all ages.

As it relates to our site system, per the Ohio Revised Code, we are required to maintain and preserve historical sites throughout the state. Currently, there are 58 sites that we have been tasked to manage. 360502 serves as the line item where we are able to perform those duties authorized to us the ORC. Additionally, the National Afro American Museum and Cultural Center, and the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Museums and Library have separate lines for those sites. However, we have many sites that need more staffing and need more maintenance in order for us to continue our mission of maintaining and preserving Ohio history. More importantly, ensuring that all of our historic sites are something that residents of those areas and visitors alike can be proud of. The increase to this line item is a great start and we are appreciative of it, but the increase in FY 24 and FY 25 are divided up by 58 sites statewide and therefore may not have the transformative impact that we were seeking in our initial request. Contained in line 360502, \$3 M that is spent directly in local communities throughout the state. Our site system is largely managed through the collaboration of a management partner, a local organization that is responsible for daily operations while we maintain responsibility for large-scale maintenance, capital projects, collections, and exhibits. In seeking any increase in this line, we seek increase the dollars that go back to over 50 communities in 41 across Ohio.

As an illustration, the Armstrong Air and Space Museum Association is a private non-profit that has been the management partner for the Armstrong Air and Space Museum in Wapakoneta since 2008. This organization employs 14 people and serves over 40,000 visitors annually. They leverage the state dollars that we pass on to them to raise funds for projects in addition to

admission and programming dollars. Last year, the association installed a Lear Jet that Neil Armstrong broke records on the museum grounds and celebrated the museum's 50th anniversary. Investments the state makes in 360502 are investments in many organizations like the Armstrong Air and Space Museum Association that make it possible for Ohio to have such a large and varied historic site network.

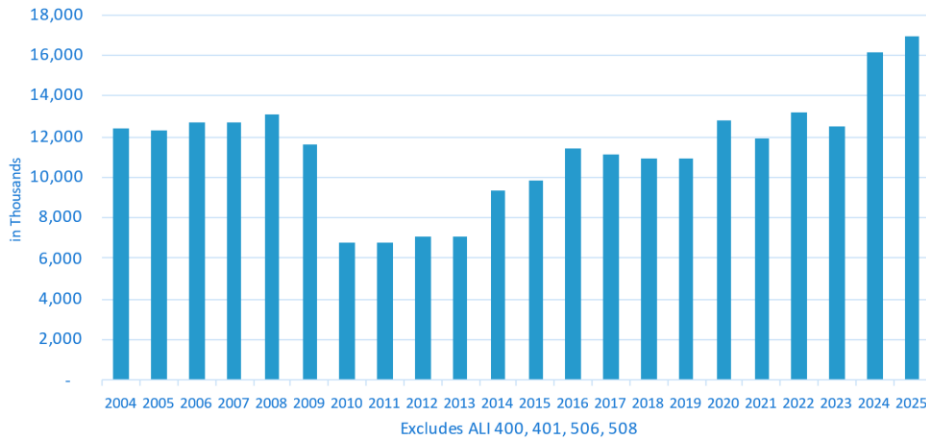
Line item 360401 relates to the Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial or America 250 – Ohio. This is Ohio's opportunity to tell our Ohio story as it relates to the founding and growth of our country dating back to 1776. The money set aside here will play a huge role in setting the stage for a wonderful and appropriate celebration of our nation in 2026 when we will mark 250 years of independence. We are supportive of their efforts and appreciate the special attention that this commission has received in Governor DeWine's proposed budget. It is our understanding that the America 250 – Ohio Commission's Executive Director Todd Kleismit will testify in front of this subcommittee to go into further detail about their plans.

The line item for the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission falls under our part of the Governor's proposed budget. This new funding level will assist this the commission in their its efforts to gather and disseminate Holocaust and Genocide information and help promote awareness of these issues.

As I conclude my testimony, I do want to thank each of you for your time and attention to Governor DeWine's proposed budget for the Ohio History Connection. While this may seem like a large increase in funding for our organization, the reality of what is proposed is that this new funding amount for FY 24 and increased in FY 25 will get our organization back to where we funded in 2008. With inflationary pressures on the entire economy, we advocate for these budget numbers so that we can employ a talented workforce that can move our site system from surviving to thriving. While our real dollars have increased over the last 15 years, the loss due to inflation has an impact on our ability to pay staff and site management partners what is needed to be the history organization Ohio deserves, but we are optimistic about the future. [See charts below] This investment with the state and my commitment to you all to be aggressive and strategic in seeking private and grant funding, we will work with our partners to show just how incredible Ohio's stories are. We certainly appreciate the increase and know that our work is only beginning in making Ohio's site system the best in the country as well as ensuring that our state's archives is properly stored and maintained for future generations.

Thank you, Chair Manning, for the opportunity to address the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education. I look forward to any questions you or members of the subcommittee may have.

Net GRF to OHC FY2004 to FY2025 Governor's Proposal



Net GRF to OHC in Today's Dollars

