

**Columbus Metropolitan Library**  
**House Ways & Means Committee**  
**H.B. 1 Opposition Testimony**  
**March 28, 2023**

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Merrin, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share written testimony in opposition to House Bill 1, which would reduce funding for the Columbus Metropolitan Library by at least \$1.9 million annually. I am Lauren Hagan, Chief Financial Officer/Fiscal Officer at Columbus Metropolitan Library.

Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML), more than a home for books, offers spaces to listen, to reflect and to grow. Serving the people of Franklin County, Ohio, since 1873 with our Main Library and 22 branches, CML is well-known for signature services and programs like School Help, Reading Buddies, Summer Reading Challenge and Ready for Kindergarten.

The library's Strategic Plan supports the vision of "a thriving community where wisdom prevails," which positions CML to respond to areas of urgent need: kids unprepared for kindergarten, third grade reading proficiency, high school graduation, college and career readiness, employment resources and support for non-profits and emerging businesses.

Central Ohio's 2.3M+ residents have no-cost access to library materials, computers and printers, wireless connectivity and digital databases that includes learning tools, research tools and popular magazines to research articles.

Last year alone, customers checked out 12.3 million items, including books, audiobooks and digital products. 90,000 children were better prepared for school thanks to CML's storytimes, classes and camps. K-12 students visited School Help Centers 62,000 times, and 44,600 people participated in reading programs. 400 classrooms in 23 local schools had a total of 59,200 books delivered to support daily in-school learning.

Because the stability of children's households depends on resourcing parents and caregivers, 10,900 adult connections were made to resources and services, in partnership with local and national organizations, to help our adult customers become part of our local workforce.

CML is able to provide this robust menu of services and programs that meet the needs of the communities we serve thanks to funding we receive through the Public Library Fund (PLF) and our local property tax levy.

Declining returns from a flattening of the income tax would result in a reduction to the state's PLF of \$25.5M to \$34M annually. This PLF reduction means CML will receive \$1.5M to \$1.9M less each year.

Franklin County voters served by CML overwhelmingly approved a 2.8 mill continuing property tax levy in 2010. The effective rate of that levy today is 2.18 mills. If H.B. 920 tax reduction

factors apply, property owners would see tax bills reflecting the original millage. Coupled with the simultaneous elimination of the 10% rollback, property owners would be left paying more in short order. If H.B. 920 does not apply, our preliminary calculations find that property tax revenues collected from the Library's levy would fall by nearly \$1.9M annually. Asking voters to approve a new levy to make up this difference at the same time the 10% rollback is eliminated will create a challenging situation for many in our community. Additionally, changes the legislature enacted through House Bill 140 last General Assembly will make it difficult for homeowners to understand the real impact a levy would have on their property tax bill.

The estimated \$1.9M - \$3.9M annual loss we will experience at CML will cause significant budgetary challenges that will necessitate cuts, a more robust levy, or a mix of both. The combination of tax changes contemplated in HB 1 are overly complex and will cost property owners who value the programs and services they have come to expect from their local library more at a time when we will be able to offer less. We ask that you eliminate the property tax changes included in HB 1 and hold the PLF harmless to any income tax changes.