

Testimony of Lynda Murray
Ohio Library Council
Senate Finance Committee – May 12, 2005

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am Lynda Murray and I represent the 251 public library systems in Ohio. I know your schedules are busy and I do not want to repeat any of the testimony offered by library director Jennifer Thompson. During the past weeks, I have met with each of your or your staff, and you know the position of the Ohio Library Council on the matters concerning public libraries in H.B. 66.

Ohio's public libraries are incredibly successful. In fact, repeated statewide surveys show that public libraries are considered the most popular, best managed public service in Ohio. We have achieved this success because of the funding provided by the Ohio General Assembly, the dedication of our trustees, and the commitment of our directors and staff. Public libraries are always finding new ways to attract patrons to their services. Over the past 130 years, public library service has evolved from the first Ohio library collection called the "Coonskin library" – made up of a few reference materials and a few printed versions of literary classics purchased by bartering trapped coonskins -- to today's modern collection of print reference, non-fiction, fiction, paperbacks, young adult serials, children's picture books, Internet access, books for the blind and handicapped, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, brochures, how-to video tapes, books on tape, Disney classics for early learners, travel videos for senior citizens, PBS specials, old television series, and yes, DVDs. These are all formats of information. These are things that Ohio's citizens expect from their public library and expect them at no charge. This combination of materials provides something for everyone. And brings over 70% of Ohio's citizens into our public libraries each year.

In addition to our materials collections, Ohio citizens are proud of the customer services that the public libraries provide. Every year, Ohio is ranked as the best state in the nation in providing library service. These services include reference, summer reading

programs – which serve over half a million young readers each summer, book discussion groups, computer training for seniors, just to name a few. We are successful because we attract the best librarians in the country. Success begets success. Ohio is also recognized around the country for its hallmark collaborative efforts. Some of these efforts include the statewide purchasing of data bases and internet access through OPLIN, 24 / 7 reference through KnowItNow, and inter library loan –which allows public libraries to share their collections with other public libraries and in many cases, schools.

Each of you know what the public library means in your communities. We understand that these are difficult times in Ohio. We ask that you give public libraries your support and allow us to continue to run successful public libraries.

I would be glad to answer any questions.