

Lauren Hagan
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House Bill 96
Interested Party Testimony

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on public library funding and policy provisions included in the House-passed budget. I am Lauren Hagan, CEO of Columbus Metropolitan Library.

The state legislature has supported Ohio's public libraries for nearly a century because of the foundational role libraries play on the education, literacy, workforce development, civic and economic outcomes of the communities we serve. In recent decades, this has been through a small but meaningful portion of the General Revenue Fund (GRF) being directed to the Public Library Fund or PLF, providing basic, reliable funding and allowing us to plan and respond to community needs.

At Columbus Metropolitan Library, we believe one of our community's most pressing needs is ensuring all children are successful in school. That is why our Young Minds strategy is at the forefront of our efforts.

Look no further than storytime for this work. What seems like a fun-filled 30-minute reading, singing and dancing session to the untrained eye is a well-planned kindergarten readiness program designed around the four cornerstones of reading—letter recognition, beginning letter sounds, rhymes and vocabulary. We continue building upon this work in our Ready for Kindergarten Classes, which give kids hands-on practice of kindergarten skills like writing letters and cutting with scissors.

Our work does not stop when school starts. In support of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, we offer Reading Buddies—an after school, one-on-one reading practice session using Science of Reading principles. We also have School Learning Centers at all 23 of our locations, providing free after-school help to students in grades K-12. In 2024, we hosted over 24,000 Reading Buddies sessions and more than 54,000 School Learning sessions.

Building bridges between the classroom and the library helps ensure student success. That is why we host or attend more than 1,000 school field trips or class visits every year. We also host very popular Summer and Winter Reading Challenges to encourage kids to continue reading and learning when school is out of session. Last year, we saw over 66,000 participants in these challenges.

We also work with tweens and teens on building the skills needed to be successful after high school. Volunteens work with library staff and other youth to support customers of all ages with many different library programs. They learn about leadership, teamwork and effective communication while also earning service hours. Our internship program goes a step further by giving teens paid professional experience to help build their resume and network. They receive guidance from a direct supervisor and participate in enrichment activities to expand their understanding of the work world and help them develop a vision for their future.

These are just a few examples of the incredible Young Minds work happening in Columbus that are supported through the PLF. By shifting the PLF funding source to a line-item appropriation as proposed in the House budget, uncertainty and stagnation are brought to communities that rely on their public library for these programs and services and so many more. Basic state funding for public libraries recognizes our unparalleled impact on all members of our community and ensures we can continue to meet the needs of Ohioans without interruption or compromise.

As you contemplate library funding, I also want to flag for you a House amendment that would require public libraries “to place material related to sexual orientation or gender identity or expression in a portion of the library that is not primarily open to the view of minors.”

Ohio’s libraries have robust collection development policies written, reviewed and updated by expert librarians that determine where materials should be shelved. A West Arkansas library was recently sued and lost on 1st Amendment grounds for segregating materials in a similar way to what is proposed in the House-passed budget.¹

This provision also restricts families’ freedom to decide what is appropriate for themselves and their children. To support families with this, we offer kid’s library cards—which allow customers under the age of 18 to check out *only* materials from our kids or teens sections. These cards are not permitted to check out adult materials, movies, video games, e-books or audiobooks. Parents who wish to do so may sign their child up for a “full access” card but can add restrictions on their child’s ability to check out movies and video games rated R or Mature.

The proposed policy is also too vague to provide real guidance to libraries on what is meant to be restricted, which will lead to inconsistent and arbitrary enforcement across Ohio. One small library in Idaho, where a similar measure was passed, was forced to become adults-only out of concern that they could not move regulated materials far enough from their children’s section given their small space.²

Finally, implementing these requirements would also be costly, and no additional funds are included in the proposal. Libraries will need to review and reclassify their collection, redesign spaces, retrain staff and possibly purchase new shelving or add new security measures. On the next page, we made an educated guess at the financial impact this policy would have on our library. We anticipate the initial cost for compliance at \$3.14 million with continuing costs of approximately \$1.7 million every year. This policy unnecessarily diverts funds from essential programs and services that our community relies on. It must be removed.

As I close, I ask again that you restore the funding source for the Public Library Fund to 1.75% of the GRF, as Governor DeWine included in his budget proposal, and remove the vague House-provision related to where we shelve certain books.

Thank you for your time and support for Ohio’s libraries.

¹ <http://arkansasadvocate.com/2025/04/29/crawford-county-library-will-foot-the-bill-for-lawsuit-over-segregation-of-lgbtq-childrens-books/>

² <https://www.boisestatepublicradio.org/politics-government/2024-05-20/donnelly-public-library-idaho-books>



Preliminary Cost Estimate to comply with proposed budget bill related to moving materials

HB 96 - FY25 and FY27 Budget Bill includes the following language:

Requires a public library to place material related to sexual orientation or gender identity or expression in a portion of the library that is not primarily open to the view of minors

CML's collection contains 1.7 million physical items. Potential number of items in CML's Children's and Teen collection estimated to be subject to the proposed state budget language is 17,000 items.

Costs to comply with the proposed change are listed below:

Item	Calculation ¹	One-Time Costs	Estimated On-Going Annual Costs ²
Dedicated Staff Member in Collection Services, team responsible for managing materials	full-time librarian annual cost	\$ 78,429	\$ 81,566
Develop Policy and Legal Review to comply with policy	10 hours x \$500/hour for legal review	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Additional Shelving	Shelves for 17,000 items	\$ 243,618	\$ -
Shelving Installation	\$2,500 x 23 locations	\$ 57,500	\$ -
Labels for the physical materials	\$309.60/carton x 23 locations	\$ 7,121	\$ 850
Staff time to review titles	2,228 titles, 2 min review of each 74.27 hours x \$47.34/hour	\$ 3,516	\$ -
Staff time to apply labels	21,567 items, 30 seconds per item 179.73 hours x \$24.62/hour	\$ 4,425	\$ -
Staff time to place holds	21,567 items, 30 seconds per item 179.73 hours x \$29.13/hour	\$ 5,235	\$ -
Staff time to pull materials	21,567 items, 30 seconds per item 179.73 hours x \$24.62/hour	\$ 4,425	\$ -
	Subtotal	\$ 409,268	\$ 82,416

¹Staff costs includes salary, OPERs and Medicare, no additional benefits

²Assumes 4% increase in staff costs

If required to move items to a dedicated portion of the building, additional costs are listed below:

Item	Calculation ³	One-Time Costs	Estimated On-Going Annual Costs ²
Dedicated Branch Staff Member per location	average salary + OPERs for ISS \$70,635 x 22 locations	\$ 1,553,970	\$ 1,616,129
Dedicate 144 sq/ft per location	144sq/ft (12x12 room) x \$373 /sqft x 22 locations	\$ 1,181,664	\$ -
	Subtotal	\$ 2,735,634	\$ 1,616,129

³Assumes no additional staff or reno needed at Main Library

Total	\$ 3,144,902	\$ 1,698,545
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