



The Sunset Review Committee
The Honorable Sen. Kris Jordan, Chairman

Testimony on behalf of the Ohio History Connection Board of Trustees
Todd Kleismit, Director of Community & Government Relations
May 3, 2016

Chairman Jordan, Vice Chairman Brown and members of the Sunset Review Committee:

Thanks for the opportunity to be with you today to discuss the Ohio History Connection and our Board of Trustees. Glenda S. Greenwood, our board president and Burt Logan, our executive director and CEO, both send their best wishes. I know that you are all very familiar with our organization and structure, so I will keep my testimony brief so that you may ask more specific questions.

As a reminder, the Ohio History Connection was established as the state's history partner in 1885 as the State Archaeological and Historical Society. After a couple of name changes (most recently in 2014), we continue to serve in much the same capacity with much the same purpose as originally conceived. Put simply, we preserve, protect and make accessible Ohio's rich and diverse history. One of our first board presidents was former U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes. Many of you may recognize some of our current trustees such as former Governor Nancy Putnam Hollister. A complete list is included at the end of my testimony for your reference.

Our financial outlook in recent years has stabilized greatly in recent years, thanks to the Ohio General Assembly. I think it also appropriate to take you back a few years... Some of you may recall that our Trustees made what turned out to be a great decision during "The Great Recession." Our GRF support from the state had dropped quickly from approximately \$13.5 million to about \$7.6 million (FY 2008 to FY 2010) during the economic crisis. We noticed many other states closed their historic sites for a period of time or even eliminated history functions altogether. Instead, our Trustees approved a plan whereby the organization dipped into our private reserves to supplement our operating budget at the rate of up to \$1.5 million the first year, up to \$1 million the second year and \$500,000 in the third year. We were proud to maintain our operations throughout that period and have recovered our organization's reserves so we can be prepared for another economic crisis.

It is an exciting time to work at the Ohio History Connection as are building and growing for the future. In the interest of time, I just want to share a few activities with you:

Reflective of our name change, we are "Connecting" all over the state and even beyond our state's borders. We will soon embark on an 88-county tour to hear more from Ohioans, local organizations and community leaders about how we can help bring history services to local communities. We have filled a new position, director of American Indian Relations, to lead our efforts to work more directly with the American Indian tribes (mostly in Oklahoma) that have

historic ties to Ohio. We are also very deliberately reaching out to underserved communities to ensure that Ohio's history is as inclusive as possible. In the meantime, we continue to partner with local history-related organizations, educators, local governments, state agencies and others to make Ohio history as accessible as we can while as protecting it for future generations.

We continue to pursue UNESCO World Heritage status for several of our 2,000-year-old American Indian sites at Fort Ancient, the Newark Earthworks and at the NPS's Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Chillicothe. World Heritage is the highest possible designation possible for sites like these demonstrating "outstanding universal value." There are no World Heritage sites in Ohio today, but we are excited to be working with numerous stakeholders to change that before the end of this decade.

A lot of other important projects are underway: State History Day competition was this past weekend, Call for Military Collections, the "Great Collections Experiment" gallery opens at the Ohio History Center on May 28, Ohio Open Doors (Sept. 9-18), the Harding 2020 Project and Cokie Roberts will be speaking at Fremont's Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library May 29 to celebrate the Hayes Library's centennial. I could go on, but suffice it to say we are busy connecting, commemorating and preserving history for Ohio and Ohioans.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

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