

Verbal Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2716  
Presented to Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation By  
Mendy Pfannenstiel, Director of Arkansas City Public Library

March 14, 2023

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

As the Director of the Arkansas City Public Library, I speak on behalf of the Board of Directors of ACPL in support of HB 2176. This bill:

- *will allow residents to the opportunity to decide on how they wish to receive and support library services*
- *improves equity in financing library services, and*
- *allows the opportunity for increases in future revenue.*

The Library Board determined that our need to operate the library and serve the community exceeded the tax authority of the City of Arkansas City as provided for by charter ordinance. There has been a lack of growth in the ad valorem tax base, which is the primary source of revenue for library support, and we fear that we might have to consider cuts to staffing, services, and hours of operation if additional funding isn't obtained.

Tax Receipts	
2018 - \$347,293	2021 - \$392,771
2019 - \$355,637	2022 - \$399,946
2020 - \$372,152	

While there have been steady increases, it hasn't been enough to outpace inflation—especially after COVID—and address our library's funding concerns.

- *ACPL receives 40% less in tax receipts compared to other libraries in the state that serve a similar population size<sup>1</sup>*
- *Increasing our mill levy as allowed by current charter ordinance isn't likely. We've been capped at 6 mills for several decades.*

Additionally, new partnerships forged from a literacy grant funded by the Kansas Health Foundation and housed at USD 470<sup>2</sup> and a recent, insightful look at county statistics that focuses on how poverty impacts health and education<sup>3</sup>, has invigorated our efforts to address the library's current funding levels.

- *70% of USD 470 students are on free/reduced lunches*
- *65% of Kindergartners are at some risk to high risk of not reaching performance targets*
- *22% of students are English Language Learners*
- *There are tracts inside and outside of city limits that are more disadvantaged than 50% - 99% of all census tracts in the U.S.*

While we are seeing property valuations increase, we have determined that there is a need for additional funds to provide more services to the larger community in an effort to address new strategic goals. These goals require hiring additional staff to:

- *expand our outreach and Bookmobile services to disadvantaged neighborhoods and rural areas*
- *establish a research-based model for early literacy, parent engagement, and family support programs*

- provide solutions to the digital divide and Broadband inequity by circulating hotspots and cellular-enabled devices
- connect in various ways with the community to help tackle symptoms of poverty and lack of access to resources by building more collaborative partnerships with other local organizations

ACPL serves a population of almost 12,000 City residents and a broader population within USD 470 of around 15,383<sup>4</sup>. The library has close to 13,000 user accounts, of which 73% is comprised of City residents and 27%, non-City residents. Based on a current usage report, circulation of materials is made by 68% of City residents and 32% of non-City residents.

	Patrons (12,685)	Usage (2022 Circulation)	2022 Budget Support	Proposed Budget Support	Current Share of Budget	Revised Share of Budget
City Residents	9,284 (73%)	68%	\$420,276.41 (6 mills)	\$350,230.34 (5 mills)	91%	68%
Non-City Residents (1,923 w/in USD 470*)	3,427 (27%)	32%	\$41,017.63 of which the library received \$37,643 in service value (1.229 mills via SCKLS)	\$165,447.87 (5 mills)	9%	32%
Source	Apollo: Member Types	Apollo report: Circ/Reserves by Member Type	Cowley County Clerk: 2022 Property Values by Tax Unit	Based on 2022 property values in USD 470 boundaries taxed at 5 mills		

\*It is important to note that non-city resident usage cannot easily be separated based on address. We believe that most of the usage is from non-residents within the 470 boundaries simply based on proximity.

I humbly ask that you support HB 2176 and sincerely thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to present our library’s concerns. **The Library Board supports a plan to pass a resolution for a tax levy of 5 mills. This would lower taxes for about 78% of the residents within USD 470 boundaries for library services, a relief that those taxpayers would certainly welcome.**

Best regards,



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<sup>1</sup> State Library of Kansas. 2021 Kansas Public Library Statistics. Retrieved from KS Statistical Data and Reports <https://kslib.info/1502/2021-KS-Public-Library-Statistics>

<sup>2</sup> Arkansas City USD 470 (2023). Early Literacy Initiative. Retrieved from [https://www.usd470.com/293054\\_2](https://www.usd470.com/293054_2).

<sup>3</sup> Legacy Regional Community Foundation (2022). A Closer Look at Cowley Kids. Retrieved from <https://www.legacyregionalfoundation.org/apply-for-funding/cowley-kids>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2021). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for Arkansas City Unified School District 470, KS* <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/97000US2003450-arkansas-city-unified-school-district-470-ks/>