



PRESS RELEASE
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State budget further erodes crucial public services

If the pending 2018-2019 state budget passes, Ohioans may be frustrated to find fewer well-stocked fishing holes or outdated reference materials at the state library. People filing tax appeals complaints might need to wait a while. The budget starves small but important state agencies, according to a new Policy Matters Ohio report that examines operational funding for five state entities.

The 2018-2019 budget would slash operating funding for the state library by 14 percent, compared to the current budget, which ends on June 30th, which will reduce the ability to buy reference materials. Sportsmen volunteered to pay higher fees so the Wildlife division of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources can maintain facilities and hire staff, but legislators rebuffed their request. The Board of Tax Appeals may reduce staff, possibly causing backlogs.

“Slashed resources hurt services,” said author Wendy Patton.

Ohio has already cut many essentials. Local governments are making do with a billion dollars less per year than in 2010. Investment in K-12 schools decline, adjusted for inflation, when employers are demanding more skills and education. Underfunding of higher education means Ohio community colleges and public universities cost much more than the national average. Alongside that deep disinvestment are myriad examples of cuts to smaller parts of the public sector. This report documents those less visible but still terribly damaging cuts. The services described here are small, relatively speaking. However, the ongoing erosion of state support across scores of programs diminishes public services in a way that affects us all.

“Ohio’s civic, civil rights, environmental, recreational, intellectual and cultural services have been starved for too long, and the budget bill for 2018-19 makes it worse,” said Patton. “These programs need more resources — resources that are available if we eliminate unneeded tax breaks and restore a fair and adequate tax system, eroded over the past dozen years with tax cuts and tax breaks.”

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Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.

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