Chairman Coley, Vice Chairman Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni, and other members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. For the past eight and one-half years I have directed the law library and held a faculty position at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. For nineteen years prior to that I managed information technology services and taught at the Duke University School of Law. In that time, I personally observed the growth of Internet services such as Gopher and the launch of the now ubiquitous World Wide Web. I helped to bring up Duke Law’s web server, one of the first at a law school.

I first taught legal research more than twenty-seven years ago, and well before my academic career, I practiced law in Florida for nearly ten years. My career experience has informed my belief that access to reliable versions of the law is a fundamental right of every citizen. Maintaining an historical and authenticated record of the law is also necessary to the work of those in representative government, from water districts and school boards, city councils, and county commissions through state legislatures and the Congress. Intelligent legislating requires a knowledge of what has already been adopted, so that lawmakers may propose changes to existing law or entirely new ones. Administrative rulemaking and court decisions also impact each of us every day, and the availability of authenticated versions of those materials is a vital part of protecting the rights of citizens and helping us to meet our legal obligations.

In his written testimony, Professor and Uniform Law Commissioner Jeff Ferriell has set out a thorough description of S.B. 139, and its three basic requirements for authentication, preservation, and accessibility of official versions of the state’s legal materials. As he emphasizes, the act leaves the detailed means of accomplishing these goals to the designated official publishers, who can apply the latest and best practices for meeting the requirements. This flexibility avoids obsolescence of electronic materials. I will take this opportunity to update Professor Ferriell’s count of enactments, which now stands at 17, including 16 states and the District of Columbia.

In adopting UELMA, Ohio would join a growing number of jurisdictions choosing to make the law freely available in authenticated form for today and future generations. The state’s official publishers could tap into a community of state officials and not-for-profit organizations that are working to implement the act in an efficient and cost-effective manner. I strongly urge the committee to favorably report on the bill.