

PERRY COUNTY COURT
JUDGE DEAN L. WILSON
105 NORTH MAIN STREET
NEW LEXINGTON, OHIO 43764

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Johnson, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in reference to SB 25 the creation of the Perry County Municipal Court and establishment of a full-time judgeship of the Court.

On November 18, 2013 the Perry County Court submitted a proposal to the Supreme Court of Ohio requesting to convert the Perry County Court to a Municipal Court with one full-time judgeship and no Magistrate.

In October of 2013 the Perry County Court took over all the caseload of the Village of New Lexington and in September of 2014 took over all the caseload of the Village of Somerset, which are the two largest municipalities within the jurisdiction of Perry County. Perry County Court has also taken over the caseload of New Straitsville Mayors Court and Shawnee Mayors Court in 2016.

On April 7, 2014 the court received notification from the Supreme Court of Ohio recommending/supporting the conversion of the Perry County Court to a Municipal Court with one full-time judgeship.

I, Judge Dean L. Wilson and the Perry County Court Staff understand the critical role the court plays in keeping families as well as the community safe. With the court operating on a full-time basis as a Municipal Court with a full-time judgeship, cases would be able to be adjudicated in less time and the court would not struggle to meet the time constraints set forth by local and state rule. Further, court patrons would be able to have their issues resolved in a timely fashion which would result in less cost to the patron, swifter justice for victims, and more overall satisfaction.

Over the past few years Perry County Court has seen an increase in the number of cases that are non-bondable offenses therefore must appear in court before the Judge, compared to past years where a significant amount of the cases were bondable offenses.

October 1, 2015, Perry County began the implementation of a specialized docket known as the Perry County New Direction Drug Court. The purpose of the Perry County New Direction Court seeks to diminish substance abuse, crime, and recidivism of participants through intense supervision, treatment, and judicial monitoring of Court participants. This program will endeavor to end the cycle of addiction for each participant by providing a balance between remedial intervention and judicial accountability. The focus will be directed upon improving the personal and social aspects of each participant through connections to appropriate programs, including substance abuse

counseling, mental health counseling, educational training, and housing programs. Our focus will be to improve the overall quality of life of the participants in our community and transforming them to become productive members of the community in all aspects of their lives by teaching them the skills necessary to overcome their drug dependency.

Perry County New Direction Drug Court is authorized to fully operate and currently has 15 (fifteen) participants. The Court has hired a drug court probation officer.

The jurisdiction of the County Court, Civil Division, extends to cases involving sums of money up to \$15,000.00 with claim of \$6,000.00 or less being processed through the Small Claims Division of the Court.

In 2016, 610 Civil and Small Claims were filed. Those cases dealt with such matters as contracts, accounts, garnishments, attachments, executions, forcible entry and detainer as well as other various matters. We saw the biggest increases in evictions and garnishments due to the state of the economy.

The Criminal and Traffic Division had a total of 2,671 filings of that total 798 were Criminal filings and 1873 were traffic filings. Criminal cases handled in the County Court include, but not limited to, domestic violence, assault, aggravated menacing, criminal trespass, drug abuse, drug abuse instruments, underage consumption, underage sales, etc. Traffic offenses include, but not limited to, O.V.I. (operating a vehicle under the influence), physical control, DUS (driving under suspension), speed, failure to control, etc.

The caseload has increased from 2015 where there were 679 Civil and Small Claims filed, 1628 Traffic Cases and 777 Criminal Cases filed.

The expected caseload for 2017 is to be in the neighborhood of 5,000 to 6,000 cases.

In addition to the misdemeanor jurisdiction of the Court, all preliminary hearings in felony cases are processed through the County Court system.

In May of 1993 the court established a probation department which consisted of 1 (one) probation officer with a caseload of approximately 70(seventy) offenders. In 1999 the court applied for a state grant and was able to hire an Intensive Supervision Probation Officer. Currently, the Perry County Court Probation Department oversees 550 (five-hundred fifty) offenders.

With these facts in mind, I would encourage the consideration of the conversion from the Perry County Court to a full-time Municipal Court with a full-time judgeship.