

Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
HB 5 Proponent Testimony
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Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 5. HB 5 will not only help to address the need for indigent defense in underserved areas but also help address a part of the student debt crisis seen across the state.

This fall, I will begin my legal education at Capital University's part-time, evening law program. Even at the beginning stages of my legal career, the thoughts of how I will handle the cost of furthering my education come to mind. Capital's program comes with a price tag of roughly \$116,000 in tuition costs, which does not include the cost of books and other fees. Under this program, an individual serving as a public defender can receive \$85,000 in student loan repayment over 5 years. This, coupled with the federal Public Service Student Loan Forgiveness program, makes a legal education much more obtainable for anyone.

The financial incentives in this bill greatly increase the appeal of practicing law in underserved areas. So many parts of the state, including Dover, OH where I am originally from, have such a strong mentality of either running from the area and never looking back or being "stuck" there forever. This mentality comes from a perceived lack of opportunity for individuals who have recently graduated from college. It is legislation like this that helps create opportunity in these areas. People working towards these financial incentives will then have the time to find a permanent place in the communities in which they work. As more and more people take advantage of opportunities such as these, our underserved communities slowly become hubs of opportunity.

HB 5 truly is a piece of legislation that creates opportunity across the state and increases access to legal services. It increases the opportunity for individuals to continue their education, creates opportunity for individuals to sustainably apply their education in underserved areas, and increases the availability of legal representation to those who need it most. It is my pleasure to have provided proponent testimony on this legislation, and I welcome any questions that the committee may have.