

**STATEMENT OF JOHN T. MARTIN
ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**

**TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE
OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5

**May 30, 2019
10:00 a.m.**

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Chairman Lang

Ranking Member Leland

Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of H.B. 5. At the outset, I would draw the Committee's attention to the statement that has previously been submitted in support of H.B. 5 by Cuyahoga County Chief Public Defender Mark Stanton. I concur in Mr. Stanton's analysis of how H.B. 5 will help public defender offices throughout the State to attract and retain high-quality attorneys who cannot currently afford to make long-term commitments to being public defenders.

During my 34 years of legal practice, I have had the pleasure of working with many law students, first at the University of Akron School of Law where I was a visiting professor from 1995 to 1997, and then at the Case Western Reserve University School of Law, where I have been an adjunct professor since 2002. In my professional lifetime, student loan debt has increased markedly as the cost of education has far outpaced just about any other cost in society, particularly salaries in the public sector. My current students are oftentimes swimming in debt.

The beauty of HB 5 is that it provides the State Public Defender with the discretion to target money where it is needed the most, in attorney shortage areas. Moreover, because the General Assembly serves as a source of funding and oversight over the State Public Defender, the General Assembly will still have the ability to ensure that the State Public Defender is managing the program in a manner with which you, as our elected representatives, are comfortable. As an added benefit, by helping young public defenders avoid having to seek re-financing or hardship deferrals during their loan payment period, the money is returned to our

financial institutions more quickly, thus enabling banks to circulate that money more effectively to the next wave of deserving students.

For all of these reasons, I urge the passage of H.B. 5.

Thank you.