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Good morning Chairman Carfagna and Ranking Member Sweeney. My name is Jay Easterling and I am here testifying on behalf of Attorney General Dave Yost. Thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 166 and the Attorney General Office's (AGO) budget for FY20-FY21. As Attorney General Yost begins his first term, he has inherited a sophisticated operation that has a highly skilled staff that shares a common goal: To serve and defend the laws of the state of Ohio and its citizens.

The current budget request for the AGO is \$385,390,428 in FY20 and \$390,149,305 in FY21. An increase respectively of 8.6% from the FY19 estimated ending budget for FY20 and an increase of 1.2% for FY21. These increases are much needed in order to retain our staff, which will allow us to continue to carry out the core mission of the AGO and provide the level of service our local law enforcement agencies have come to expect in our great state. The AGO currently employs 1502 FTE and is predicting to remain close to that number in the next biennium.

Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation

During Governor DeWine's tenure in this office, the AGO launched some of the most important law enforcement initiatives of modern times through the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, commonly known as BCI. These include the initiative to eliminate the massive backlog of rape kits languishing in storage in evidence rooms throughout the state, as well as his efforts to fight the opioid epidemic through support of multi-jurisdictional drug-trafficking task forces and improved and expanded narcotics testing services for local law-enforcement agencies. These initiatives have resulted in tremendous benefits to the people of Ohio, first by bringing hundreds of sexual predators to justice, and by contributing to the recent dramatic decline in the rate of opioid overdose deaths. In short, thanks to BCI's expanded mission and capacity, including specialized investigators and high-tech lab equipment, more crimes have been solved, more justice has been won, and more lives have been saved. While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done.

The ongoing needs of local law enforcement through continuing drug testing, DNA testing, and rape kit processing is what drives the need to preserve the as-introduced funding amounts for the AGO. The increase noted earlier includes an increase in GRF funding in our Operating Expense line item in the amount of \$19,500,000 in FY20 and \$21,500,000 in FY21. These amounts are going to specifically be put towards continuing the historic work set by Attorney General Yost's predecessor. These initiatives were possible with unprecedented investments in staffing and laboratory equipment at BCI. While there has been a great amount of investment in our crime-fighting services, there has not been a corresponding increase in GRF funding. In fact, since 2003, the office has seen a decrease of 33.7% in GRF funding. Attorney General Yost is taking the first step in correcting an institutional issue with the funding levels of this office in an effort to restore funding to our 2003 levels.

I'd like to take a moment to highlight some of the great work BCI is doing on the frontlines, serving as an indispensable partner for local law enforcement statewide. Governor DeWine greatly elevated

BCI's expertise and capabilities during his time as Attorney General. BCI has reduced the length of time it takes for lab results to be returned from several months to under 21 days, which means criminals are off the streets faster and our families are kept safer. BCI has seen an increased number in drug related cases from nearly 14,000 cases in 2011 to 22,000 cases in 2018. All the while, BCI has seen a decrease in staff from 408 employees in FY16 to 375 in FY19. In fact, due to the increase in workload and lack of adequate staffing, we had to outsource over 5,700 drug cases in 2017 and slightly more than 3,500 cases in 2018. BCI is trying to reduce expenses and improve efficiency. Rest assured that Attorney General Yost has not strayed from his proven record of working toward more efficient government but efforts to fight crime can rarely be short cut. Our BCI has a solid record of performing extraordinary work for our local law enforcement partners.

It is not an exaggeration to say that thanks to BCI, Ohio law enforcement statewide now operates at a level of effectiveness not seen before -- a level that local law enforcement and the residents of Ohio have come to regard as vital and necessary. The funding amounts listed above are to act as a permanent, stabilizing funding stream for BCI. In the past, BCI's ongoing operations have been expanded and funded by one time monies that are now non-existent. Additionally, BCI has been able to receive support from other fund reserves throughout the AGO, most of which are no longer available. In order to stabilize the office as a whole, we're asking that this practice end. Without this additional funding, BCI will not be able to continue to sustain its current level of service.

Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission

Also under the jurisdiction of the AGO is the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OCIC). The purpose of OCIC is to provide a means by which local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies can join together to effectively investigate and prosecute organized criminal enterprises operating within multiple jurisdictions. Since 1986, the OCIC has worked with local law enforcement to form organized crime task forces around the state to take on both domestic and international criminal enterprises. While I am unable to disclose the number and location of our task forces due to confidential law enforcement reasons, task forces have been organized for a variety of issues including human trafficking and drug trafficking and interdiction. Through the work of the OCIC Task Forces in 2018 alone, OCIC seized over \$57 million in drugs and assisted 264 victims of human trafficking. Considering OCIC is operating on a budget of \$2.6 million for FY19, the return on investment is enormous both from a monetary standpoint and a public safety perspective. Unfortunately, the budget at OCIC is currently only able to cover the costs of carrying out the mission of the OCIC and for costs incurred by task forces, but not salaries for local law enforcement officials. In our re-submission of the suggested budget for the office, the AGO submitted language to properly fund OCIC task forces with an appropriation and also sought a permanent law change to allow OCIC to pay task force members -- an incentive to expand an already well-functioning partnership. That request was not included in the submission to the legislature. We ask that you consider establishing that authority as you review HB 166.

We also ask for consideration of amending HB 166's temporary law section to have OCIC retain the \$500,000 of AGO Operating Expenses designated to be used on narcotics task forces at the Department of Public Safety as part of the Governor's RecoveryOhio Initiative. This appears to be duplicative with the well-functioning task forces at OCIC which are in need of additional resources. We are requesting that you take action to clarify what may have been a drafting error and allow these funds to be used by OCIC for its purposes. Let me be clear, Attorney General Yost is in support of the Governor's RecoveryOhio Initiative. However, we do not believe it is prudent to recreate task

forces that already exist. We also suggest any additional funding designed to incentivize local law enforcement to participate be directed through OCIC.

Finally, we believe additional duplication is contemplated in the Department of Public Safety's budget to largely duplicate the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway currently housed at BCI. Today, the Law Enforcement Gateway serves as a uniform records management and data intelligence system used by all law enforcement. If the legislature is willing to invest in improving a system of this type, the current system is worthy of consideration as it is utilized by law enforcement every day.

Chairman Carfagna and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to testify today in support of the Governor's proposed budget for the AGO for FY20 and FY 21. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.