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Good afternoon Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee. My name is Mike Rodgers and I am the Director of Policy and Public Affairs for Attorney General Dave Yost. I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on the Attorney General Office's (AGO) budget for FYs 20 and 21, as part of your broader review of the operating budget in Sub. House Bill 166.

During Attorney General Yost's first few months in office, it is clear he has inherited a sophisticated operation comprised of a highly skilled staff that all share a common goal: To serve and defend the laws of the state of Ohio and its citizens. The "As Pending in House Finance Committee" budget for the AGO is \$389,371,857 in FY 20 and \$394,179,352 in FY 21. These funding levels represent an increase of 9.7% from FY 19 to FY 20, and an increase of 1.2% from FY 20 to FY 21. This level of funding was maintained in the substitute version of House Bill 166, and the House added roughly \$4 million additional dollars each fiscal year to support domestic violence programs and rape crisis centers that receive funding from the AGO.

The increased funding, which was included in the Governor's initial executive budget proposal, is vital to both retain current staffing levels and to continue to carry out the core mission of the AGO. This includes protecting Ohio's consumers, serving as legal counsel for all Ohio agencies, departments, boards and commissions, including the Ohio legislature, and working to defend the laws you pass and support local law enforcement.

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 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 by bringing hundreds of sexual predators to justice, and by contributing to the decline of unintentional drug overdose deaths involving prescription opioids. 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.

As BCI's operations have been expanded over the years, there has not always been a dedicated and consistent funding stream to support these activities. In fact, since 2003, BCI has seen a decrease of 33.7% in GRF funding. To compensate for these losses, BCI has been funded by one-time monies that are now non-existent, or from other fund reserves most of which are no longer available. In order to stabilize the office, Attorney General Yost seeks to restore funding to 2003 levels in order to keep up with the service demands present in FY 2020 and beyond. The increased funding in the

current budget will allow BCI to maintain its current staffing levels and high level of laboratory services.

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, a trend Attorney General Yost wishes to nurture and grow.

- 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 experienced a dramatic increase in the workload for drug related cases from nearly 14,000 cases in 2011, to 22,000 cases in 2018.
- BCI staff has decreased from 408 employees in FY 16 to 375 in FY 19 due to attrition and funding concerns.

BCI is constantly looking for new methods and technologies to reduce expenses and improve efficiency. Even with the funding increases proposed in Sub. House Bill 166, rest assured that Attorney General Yost will not stray from his proven record of working toward more efficient government.

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, I can share that 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 FY 19, the return on investment is enormous both from a monetary standpoint and a public safety perspective.

Unfortunately, OCIC is currently only able to cover certain costs incurred by task forces members, but not salaries for local law enforcement officials for their participation on organized crime task forces.

AGO Amendments to Sub. HB 166

Through an amendment accepted by the House in the substitute bill, the AGO's office has been granted permissive authority to cover salary expenses for local law enforcement officials

participating on OCIC taskforces, in addition to mileage and equipment reimbursements our office can currently pay for. We would ask that this language be maintained in the Senate's version of the budget so that the AGO can consider additional reimbursements to local law enforcement agencies.

Further, the House granted our request to increase the appropriation line items which supplement the pay of County Sheriffs and Prosecutors. The need for this change came as a result of the pay increase both officeholders received as a result of legislation passed at the end of the previous General Assembly. The amounts are modest adjustments and represent our best estimate of the salary needs of our local officials. Again, we urge the Senate to maintain this language inserted by the House at our request.

AGO Amendments Needed in Sub. HB 166

Current language in HB 166 establishes new narcotics interdiction task forces within the Department of Public Safety (DPS) as a piece of Governor DeWine's Recovery Ohio Initiative. During our testimony in the House, the AGO voiced our concerns over these provisions but have come to a compromise and drafted amendment language in consultation with DPS. The AGO and DPS are seeking an amendment to clarify any associated funding from DPS would go to local law enforcement agencies to establish narcotics interdiction task forces and further that those task forces shall be designated OCIC task forces subject to the approval and supervision of the commission. These added resources will help our local partners fight the opiate epidemic, strengthen existing relationships, and establish new partnerships. The AGO is actively working to resolve this issue in the House, but would ask the Senate to consider this amendment should this not make it into the pending omnibus amendment.

Should the aforementioned amendment become part of the bill, the AGO is also seeking an amendment to clarify that \$500,000 of AGO Operating Expenses designated to be used on narcotics task forces, will be disbursed directly by the AGO to taskforces operating within OCIC.

House Amendments to Sub. HB 166

As a result of the requests from victim advocates across the state, a number of increases were made to several of our budget line items.

First, the Rape Crisis Centers line item was increased from \$1.55 million in each fiscal year to \$4.55 million in each fiscal year. This fund is used to issue grants to rape crisis centers throughout the state. It is the understanding of the AGO that the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence sought this increase to expand services to underserved or unrepresented counties.

Second, the House established a new appropriation for Domestic Violence Programs in the amount of \$1 million in each fiscal year. The Ohio Domestic Violence Network requested this increase in funding in addition to the \$100,000 which is currently offered for domestic violence programs through the AGO via an Operating Expense Line Item. Similar to the Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the Ohio Domestic Violence Network hopes to expand its network to help protect victims of Domestic Violence and provide education and prevention services.

Finally the House made some modifications to the statutes concerning Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBM). Last month Attorney General Yost introduced four objectives to improve transparency and

save taxpayer dollars. The AGO believes that the language in the House version of the budget represents substantive steps towards meaningful reforms, and urges the Senate to continue the thoughtful deliberation on this topic.

Chairwoman Kunze and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to testify today in support of HB 166 and the budget for the AGO for FY 20 and FY 21. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.