



May 15, 2019

**OHIO SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY- SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 166**

**Julie Ehemann, Shelby County Commissioner**

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, I am Julie Ehemann, a Shelby County Commissioner and President of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO). I have served in an elected position in local government for 25 years.

Ohio's 88 counties serve as the arm of state government charged with providing vital services on the state's behalf. The counties and the state are fundamentally connected, and it is our shared responsibility to make Ohio stronger so that our citizens and communities can thrive.

As you are aware, Ohio counties have experienced a collective \$351 million annual revenue loss due to reductions in the Local Government Fund, Medicaid Managed Care sales tax elimination, and tangible personal property tax. Ohio counties are also anticipating a \$50 million collective sales tax revenue loss by State Fiscal Year 2021 due to the implementation of the prescription eyewear sales tax exemption and the expiration of Ohio's grandfather clause to the federal Internet Tax Freedom Act of 1998.

CCAO's main legislative priority for this budget is to have the state fully reimburse the counties for their costs incurred in fulfilling the state's constitutional obligation to provide counsel to indigent defendants. We appreciated this committee's members Vice Chair Gavarone, Senator McColley and Senator Wilson who joined with several other Senators in sending a letter to Governor DeWine asking that he include full funding for indigent defense reimbursement in his budget request.

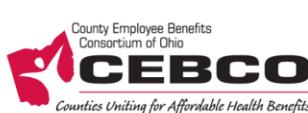
Governor DeWine's budget committed an additional \$60 million each year in general revenue funds for indigent defense, providing a reimbursement rate of approximately 80 percent in each year of the biennium. The House included an additional \$35M in the second year of the biennium with the intention of providing full reimbursement for indigent defense beginning in July 2021.

CCAO greatly appreciates these actions and asks the Senate to support the combined actions of the governor and the House reflected in Substitute HB 166 as passed by the House.



County Risk  
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Indigent defense services are demand driven and therefore it is not easy to definitively establish the actual appropriation necessary to provide full reimbursement. Therefore, CCAO also would ask that the Senate include language that would authorize additional funding to be allocated through the State Controlling Board should the actual expenses exceed the appropriation amount beginning in fiscal year 2021 so that the intent of full reimbursement can be achieved.

In addition, the sales tax reforms currently contained in Substitute HB 166 are greatly appreciated by the counties and will help counties obtain revenue stability.

Moreover, the significant investment in supporting children's services will strengthen our counties' ability to make a difference in the lives of our most precious resource - our children.

The recently adopted transportation budget also was an important step in providing resources to allow counties to invest in our roads and bridges - critical infrastructure necessary to support Ohio's economic health and prosperity.

Your actions in this budget proposal will lay a strong foundation for a meaningful state/county partnership that will serve Ohio well and improve the quality of life for the residents of our great state. Our slogan at CCAO is - Stronger counties, stronger partnership, stronger Ohio. We ask the Senate to join with the governor and House in giving real meaning to these words.