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State Representatives, 24th House District, 23rd House District

Chairman Bacon, Vice-Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 174. This is a simple bill that would create two additional judgeships in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Division of Domestic Relations, one to be elected in 2018 and another to be elected in 2020. The last time a judge was added to this branch was for the term beginning January 1997.

Among Ohio's courts of common pleas containing major metropolitan areas, Franklin County is unique in that the same set of judges hears all domestic relations and juvenile cases. Franklin County's entire domestic relations and juvenile incoming caseload per judge in 2014 was the largest among the five major metropolitan counties (Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery, and Summit counties), with 7,825 incoming cases per judge. As a matter of comparison, Hamilton County Judges have 78% of the incoming case load and Cuyahoga County Judges have less than 30% of the incoming caseload compared to Franklin County Judges.

As time moves on, the population of Columbus continues to grow, thus increasing the caseloads for these judges. As of this year, Franklin County has moved into the top spot as Ohio's most populous county.

In the House Civil Justice committee, House Bill 174 received proponent testimony from: Capital University Law School, the Columbus Bar Association, Franklin County Children's Services, Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency, three Franklin County Commissioners, the current judges of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch, Franklin County's Public Defender, Franklin County's Prosecuting Attorney, as well as a letter of support from the Administrative Director of the Ohio Supreme Court.

In a letter last year, the Supreme Court's staff analyzed case load and population growth data and concluded that the need for additional judgeships is well supported by the data.

Thank you again for allowing us to testify on House Bill 174 and we would be happy to answer any questions at this time.