



Ohio Judicial Conference

The Voice of Ohio Judges

February 20, 2018
Senate Judiciary Committee
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 354

I am Paul Pfeifer, Executive Director of the Ohio Judicial Conference, former Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio and former State Senator and Representative. The Ohio Judicial Conference's Specialized Dockets Committee has reviewed HB 354 and would like to express its support for this bill.

Drug courts are often referred to as "problem-solving courts" because they are designed to address the underlying problems that result in criminal behavior rather than to solely penalize the criminal behavior. Because an offender who is eligible for a drug court will participate in treatment and other pro-social programming, drug courts are one of only a handful of programs proven to be a cost-effective method of reducing recidivism.

HB 354 grants the Tiffin-Fostoria Municipal Court and the Seneca County court of common pleas concurrent jurisdiction in certain criminal proceedings in which the offender is admitted to participate in a drug recovery program. The judicial impact of HB 354 is limited to Seneca County, but that impact is overwhelmingly positive. In counties where there are not enough resources – or eligible participants – to warrant the creation of more than one drug court, concurrent jurisdiction is a viable and practical solution.

In fact, because the idea of collaboration between courts within a county is a practical way to provide the services of drug courts to more people in need, the Ohio Judicial Conference would support an expansion of HB 354 to include other counties or to be applied statewide. Our judges have overwhelmingly indicated that concurrent jurisdiction for drug courts would be beneficial to many, if not all, counties.

Thank you for considering the opinions of the Ohio Judicial Conference.