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Good afternoon, Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer and Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. I'm here today to discuss Senate Bill 312, which reconfigures the Hardin County Court of Common Pleas. This legislation aims to equally redistribute the caseload in Hardin County between two judges by establishing a family court and a general court in the county. The division would be as followed, the family court will oversee all juvenile and domestic relations jurisdiction, while the general division would combine general civil, criminal, and probate jurisdiction together.

If this bill were to be enacted, Hardin County would join 15 other counties in the state that have domestic relations and juvenile jurisdiction within a single division. The legislation would keep the judge's terms staggered as they are currently, and would keep the probate judge on the current probate election track. The timing is crucial in swiftly passing this legislation, as if enacted this year, it will avoid any disruption in services for either of the currently elected and serving judges, and additionally avoids forcing the county to pay for a special election midterm for a probate judge.

This legislation has the support of the Ohio Supreme Court, the Hardin County Bar Association, the Board of Commissioners of Hardin County, the Hardin County Sheriff, and the Hardin County Auditor. I'd like to thank the members of House Criminal Justice Committee for allowing me to testify today. At this time, I'd be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.