



**AMERICANS FOR  
PROSPERITY®**

**OHIO**

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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Jeff Dillon, and I am the Legislative Liaison for Americans for Prosperity – Ohio. Americans for Prosperity is the state’s largest grassroots organization focused on long-term solutions to our country’s biggest problems. **I urge you to support Substitute House Bill 5**, which will better protect and provide due process rights across Ohio by establishing a loan repayment program for law school graduates who choose to serve as public defenders in underserved areas for 3-5 years.

Many quality lawyers are passionate about helping their communities through public service but feel they are unable to work as public defenders because of the financial pressures of law school debt. House Bill 5 creates an Ohio public defender state loan repayment fund. This program will allow the state public defender to create contracts with qualified Ohio attorneys and law students in their final year of study to work as public defenders for 3-5 years in jurisdictions with the highest caseloads and greatest need for extra staff.

The right of the accused to legal representation is a bedrock of Americans’ liberties, enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Every Ohioan deserves legal representation, regardless of their resources, in order to protect against government overreach and abuse which, unfortunately, does occur too within our justice system. AFP – Ohio advocated strongly for the increased funding that the Office of the Public Defender received in this year’s budget cycle, which was greatly needed to address significant understaffing issues. In order to provide the highest quality public defense possible, the OPD should enjoy the recruiting benefit that loan repayment can provide, making public defense a more viable career choice than it currently is for too many otherwise-qualified attorneys.

AFP – Ohio also supports the creation of the task force to study indigent defense contained within Sub. H.B. 5, as we supported the concept during Budget proceedings earlier this year.

The right to counsel is a cherished American principle, which is why **I urge you to support Substitute House Bill 5**. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

Jeff Dillon  
Legislative Liaison  
Americans for Prosperity—Ohio

