



June 2, 2021

Dear Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Ohio's budget House Bill 110. We are proud to support Ohio's ongoing leadership in advancing important public safety priorities.

The Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a multi-state organization that aims to advance criminal justice reform and effective approaches to public safety in states across the country. We also bring together diverse crime survivors via our flagship project, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, to advance policies that help crime victims and stop cycles of crime. We promote strategies that reduce costly reliance on incarceration, increase trauma recovery services, and build healthy communities.

First, we write in support of the legislature's proposed expansion of TCAP coverage to include people at the F4 level who meet other program criteria. Over the last several years TCAP has shown itself to be a successful way to keep people convicted of low-level offenses out of the state prison system and to direct funding to locally determined public safety priorities across the state.

Research consistently shows that the overuse of incarceration fails to help people recover from substance abuse disorders and other factors that are core drivers of low level offenses. At the same time, treatment addresses the core problem and produces better public safety outcomes. The TCAP structure also allows participants to retain important pro-social connections to family, community, and employment that help people desist from crime, but too often disappear if they are incarcerated. Expanding the scope of the TCAP program to keep more people convicted of low-level offenses out of prison and into locally-determined supervision and treatment doubles down on this important public safety program.

We also ask the legislature to consider restoring the provisions establishing TCAP as a mandatory program across the state's 88 counties. TCAP funding expands the range of evidence-based sentencing options available at the local level and allows for a more expansive range of sentencing options. Counties have the ability to invest TCAP dollars in a range of different treatment and accountability programs and can tailor those public safety infrastructure decisions to the specific and unique needs of the local community. TCAP alternatives put people in the best position to succeed and reduce recidivism by giving them the tools to alter their behavior that landed them in court. Balancing local needs and priorities with program criteria

that are evidence-based strikes the right balance between community needs and public safety best practices.

Finally, I would also like to mention the importance of increased funding for crime victims, both in the form of victim compensation and the funding of additional trauma recovery centers.

The Ohio Attorney General's Office offers services to aid victims of violent crime through several programs. These include the victim compensation program and the Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) program. Under the victim compensation program, victims can be compensated through the fund and matching federal dollars for medical and counseling expenses, wage loss, replacement services, and funeral expenses. The compensation program is the payor of last resort, meaning survivors who receive support typically have no other means of covering these expenses.

Over the last several years, expenditures for the compensation program have exceeded revenue into the fund, making the fund unstable and jeopardizing critical services for victims of crime. The fund had a starting balance of \$17.3 million in FY2017, but just \$7.9 million at the start of FY2021. Meanwhile, significant eligibility barriers in Ohio law mean that the victim compensation program denies more than half of victims who apply for the program and who need help – the second highest denial rate in the country. These denials are largely for reasons unrelated to the victimization or the victim's need. An increase in funding for this program would ensure that victims of crime in Ohio are adequately compensated for their victimization and can begin the healing process.

Additionally, the Ohio Attorney General's Office also supports victims of crime through the funding of trauma recovery centers. These are programs operated by either a non-profit or a public entity that provides mental-health support and recovery services to patients and their families who have fallen prey to violent crime. The Alliance for Safety and Justice worked in partnership with the Ohio Attorney General's Office to establish five trauma recovery centers initially funded in 2017 and that number has increased to eight at present day. However, nearly all of these centers are in urban counties and the rural areas of Ohio are underserved. Expanding funding to create additional trauma recovery centers will ensure that victims from all regions of Ohio have access to these vital support services. Due to on-going significant cuts, existing trauma recovery centers throughout the state are having to cut staff, unfortunately this means that crime victim needs are going unmet and underserved victims are not getting the support they need to recover from violence. To ensure that crime victims in Ohio get the supportive services they need, we are calling on the General Assembly to create two new line items: 1) \$2,500,000 per FY for Trauma Recovery Centers through the Office of the Attorney General, and 2) \$5,000,000 per FY for Victims of Crime to be allocated for the Crime Victim Compensation program.

This is a moment for Ohio legislators to continue the state's tradition of leadership on proven, smarter approaches to criminal justice and public safety problem solving. We thank you for dedication and ongoing leadership on these issues, and stand ready to support you in any way.

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