



Senate Finance Committee
Tuesday, January 25, 2022
Proponent Testimony – HB 101
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I want to thank Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Finance for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 101.

My name is Michele Pomerantz, and I'm the director of regional collaboration for Cuyahoga County. One of the most pressing needs for our county is putting together funding for the replacement of our jail.

But Cuyahoga County is not alone. Put simply, the replacement and renovation of jails is a statewide challenge facing all of Ohio's 88 counties. A 2019 survey by the County Commissioners Association of Ohio and the Buckeye Sheriffs' Association reflects this reality. When surveyed about the replacement and renovation needs of their jails, members of those organizations indicated they needed at least \$1.3 billion over five years to bring their facilities up to the standards of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC).

I think it's important to acknowledge the Ohio General Assembly is aware of the jail funding needs of our counties – and that a county-state partnership is essential in tackling the financing of them. For example, the Legislature in the last capital bill included \$50 million for six facilities. This was a step in the right direction for Ohio. However, as the 2019 survey revealed, it will take a long-term financial commitment, a strong county-state partnership, and a systematic approach to address the replacement and renovation of county jails across our state.

House Bill 101, sponsored by Reps. Stephens and Edwards, is an efficient way to do just that. The legislation would create a program modeled after the school construction funding formula to prioritize jail construction projects. Once in place, this mechanism could help fund such projects in future state capital bills. This would mean a commitment to an ongoing capital assistance program the state hasn't had since 2003.

The bill would task the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) and the Ohio Department of Corrections (DRC) to develop the funding formula and rank counties based on their capacity to raise necessary funds to finance jail construction projects. Further, the agencies would create a matching program in which the state would provide a percentage of dollars – based on the factors developed to rank counties – to help pay for jail construction. The state, under this proposal, would contribute at least 25 percent toward the construction costs of a jail project after each county demonstrates a binding financial commitment. And, finally, the OFCC and DRC would work directly with county officials throughout the process to ensure construction and management plans align with project goals.

Cuyahoga County would encourage the OFCC and DRC – if this legislation becomes law – to consider the circumstances of Ohio’s urban counties when developing the funding formula. We certainly understand the need to take into account per capita income, property values, and sales tax revenue capacity. However, it’s also important to factor in the experience of our urban communities, which also face challenges in financing jail construction.

Nevertheless, whether looking at urban, suburban, or rural communities, House Bill 101 helps address a common struggle that has confronted all of our counties for decades – finding the funds necessary to replace and renovate aging jails. Not only would this bill provide a common-sense mechanism for state assistance, but it would also strengthen the county-state partnership that has been essential in serving Ohioans.

I respectfully ask the Finance Committee to support House Bill 101 and urge a “yes” vote on the legislation.

Thank you again Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and Finance Committee members for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 101.
