



**STATEMENT OF THE OHIO STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 150**

Before the Senate Finance Committee
Senator Matt Dolan, Chair

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee: on behalf of the Ohio State Bar Association, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 150. My name is Mary Amos Augsburger and I am the CEO of the Ohio State Bar Association.

The Ohio Bar estimates that over 2/3rds of counties in Ohio do not have enough lawyers to meet the legal needs of their citizens. This is a major problem that is only getting worse. To that end, the Ohio Bar has made efforts to recruit attorneys to underserved areas through programs like our rural practice initiative and collaborative efforts with Ohio's law schools. But these efforts have not produced the results that are needed to ensure that every Ohioan has the access to justice they are guaranteed by the constitutions of the United States and Ohio.

House Bill 150 would incentivize the relocation of attorneys to underserved areas of the state through a service contract that could lead to up to \$50,000 of the attorney's student loans being repaid in exchange for an agreement to work in that area for up to 5 years.

The House included an amendment that made two main changes to House Bill 150 as introduced. First, it expanded the program to apply to prosecutors in addition to public defenders and appointed counsel. We believe this is necessary as we have received feedback that prosecuting attorneys' offices have struggled in recruiting attorneys to underserved areas as well. Second, the program now requires that for a county to be considered underserved, it has to have a ratio of equal to or less than 1 attorney for every 700 persons. This ensures that the program is focused on getting attorneys where they are needed the most.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 150. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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