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**Sponsor Testimony**

Senate Bill 21

House Civil Justice Committee

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Chairman Hillyer, Vice-Chair Mathews, and Ranking Member Galonski and members of the House Civil Justice Committee: thank you for allowing us the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 21. The goal of this legislation is to save Ohioans' time and money by allowing them to contest state agency orders in their county of residence rather than Franklin County. Senate Bill 21 seeks to reduce any administrative burden involving a state agency decision.

Previous General Assemblies have used Franklin County as the default setting for almost all appeals from agency actions, causing the courts in one county to have outsized authority at the expense of those in the remaining 87. However, based on Ohio law, it is required for Ohio businesses to file appeals from agency action in Franklin County.

While it is true that current law is a convenience for state agencies who get to defend their decisions in Franklin County, it inconveniences citizens and businesses aggrieved by agency actions by requiring them to travel to Columbus.

We need to consider business owners from across the state who have an extra time commitment and expense to travel to and from Franklin County. The issue is that placing the jurisdiction for all agency appeals in a single venue is burdensome to Ohio businesses, especially if the business has no relationship to Franklin County. This also leads to lost productivity caused by pulling someone away from their place of business for a prolonged period of time. Not only will this bill reduce costs, it will also reduce the complexity of doing business in Ohio. As a result of this legislation, Ohio business owners would be more likely to appeal administrative agency orders that adversely affect their business and way of life.

Lastly, similarly to House bill 286 from the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, SB21 modifies the way that the State of Ohio can be involved in legal actions. It is important to note that this bill only references appeals to agency action and not to criminal action. SB 21 allows for the Speaker of

the House and the Senate President to retain their own legal counsel to represent the House, the Senate, or the General Assembly. It also allows the Governor to do the same. It further specifies that the General Assembly and each chamber may intervene as a matter of right at any time in any action that involves a challenge to the Ohio Constitution or laws of Ohio.

Chairman Hillyer, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Senator McColley and I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.