



Ohio Judicial Conference

The Voice of Ohio Judges

House Civil Justice Committee
HB 265
Proponent Testimony

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to offer this testimony for House Bill 265 on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference.

In 2017, Judge Joseph Bruzzese was shot on his way into the Jefferson County Courthouse, in what the media called an “ambush-style attack.” Fortunately, Judge Bruzzese survived the attack and continues to serve on the common pleas bench today. In response to this incident, the legislature passed and enacted House Bill 431 in the 132nd General Assembly, which added judges and magistrates to the existing list of “designated public service workers” who are afforded some additional privacy and personal-information-redaction protections. Unfortunately, retired judges, who face just as much a threat from angry criminal defendants and civil litigants as sitting judges, were omitted from this list.

House Bill 265 corrects this omission by allowing “former,” or retired, designated public service workers to opt in to the privacy protections already afforded to sitting designated public service workers. And with the adoption today of AM-1638-4, the Judicial Conference is happy to support the bill. The amendment makes some corrections to the as-introduced version, which requires former workers to submit a letter from their employer, and also requires a minimum of five years of service. This was concerning to us for two reasons: 1) judges, as independently elected officials, do not have “employers” from whom to seek a letter, and 2) a judge who serves less than five years on the bench is just as at risk of a future attack from a vengeful defendant as a judge who served for the required five years. AM 1638-4 adequately addresses these concerns, and with its adoption, the OJC supports the bill.

I would like to thank the sponsors of the bill for including retired public service workers, and in particular Rep. Wiggam for working with us on the amendment described above.

Paul E. Pfeifer
Executive Director