



# DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Policy & Legislation

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Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Miller.

Good Afternoon. My name is Corey Jordan and I am the Director of Policy and Legislation for Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 33 and on the Attorney General Office's (AGO) budget for FY24-FY25.

We believe that, with a few additions, the budget you have before you will allow us to continue our mission of effectively and efficiently protecting Ohioans and upholding the rule of law. I'd like to spend a few brief minutes talking about how this budget allows us to meet these goals.

## **Overview**

Today's iteration of the budget appropriates \$437.2 million in fiscal year 2024, and \$433.9 million in fiscal year 2025 to enable the AGO to accomplish our critical goals. These amounts represent a 1.6% decrease from the fiscal year 2023 estimated end budget, and a 0.8% decrease for fiscal year 2025. We are confident that these amounts are sufficient to support the services provided by the 1,500 AGO staff across our 13 offices over the coming biennium, and we thank Governor DeWine for his consideration of our budget requests. We would respectfully request the Ohio House maintain our current funding levels.

## **Training Ohio's Police through Continuing Occupational Programming: (TOP COP)**

In the previous budget, thanks to the work of Representative Abrams, the General Assembly created a \$15 million pilot program to cover 50% of the cost of continuing professional training (CPT) for Ohio's over 30,000 peace officers. The General Assembly also was supportive of an AGO request for an additional \$5 million to ensure against any lapse in funding or training as this General Assembly considers this historic, far-reaching proposal. The previous budget also established a Law Enforcement Training Funding Study Commission (LETFSC) to make recommendations for a permanent program and funding structure based on the pilot program.

The language included in the as-introduced version of the budget would codify the recommendations of the LETFSC by requiring a minimum of 24 hours of CPT annually. Mandatory training topics with corresponding minimum credit hours will be decided each year by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC), allowing local jurisdictions a level of flexibility in selecting topics for the remaining (nonmandatory) CPT topics. For 2023, OPOTC has set three mandatory training topics for an eight-hour total, allowing local entities to decide how the remaining 16 hours of training best suit their unique needs. These topics must meet statutory requirements, are agency-approved, and pre-approved by OPOTC. HB 33 provides \$40 million in GRF per fiscal year to support this effort on a quarterly reimbursement model. TOP COP is Attorney General Yost's top priority for this budget



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cycle, as the time is right to fully support and fund our law enforcement so that we may continue to have the nation's top cops.

## **Information Technology Updates**

The AGO requested funding for a number of initiatives, utilizing one-time dollars to make necessary investments for upgrades in some of the office's critical information technology infrastructure.

To support necessary technological upgrades to critical legacy systems, the AGO will utilize \$6.5 million over the biennium in one-time GRF to eliminate potential vulnerabilities. These funds will allow us to maintain compliance with federal rules and regulations, while minimizing security threats and reducing service and maintenance costs.

The AGO also plans to enhance the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway (OHLEG). The planned upgrades will substantially improve the capability of law enforcement entities to share information with one another. The enhancements will allow local agencies to access unprecedented levels of actionable information, better equipping them to protect communities. Additionally, the upgrades will allow the hundreds of agencies that rely on OHLEG's record management system to seamlessly transfer electronic copies of their casefiles to more than half of the county prosecutors in Ohio. The \$1.25 million appropriated toward this effort will also upgrade the system to integrate sex offender data to the over 300 law enforcement entities who utilize the system.

Lastly, the existing work of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation's (BCI) Cyber Crime Unit will be expanded to combat cyber identity theft and other crimes with a \$1.5 million appropriation over the biennium.

## **Supporting Victims of Crime**

The importance of the work done in the Crime Victims Services Section of the AGO cannot be overstated. Our Crime Victims Services team is responsible for administering Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds in the form of crime victim compensation awards. The AGO successfully advocated with other state attorney's general to fix the fundamental funding formula at the federal level to restore the continued cuts VOCA has endured over the past several years. While we anticipate the restoration of some of these federal VOCA funds in the next one to two years, the budget we submitted accounts for the wide range of needs to be addressed in this area up until that time. Additionally, the AGO included additional funding for the Ohio Domestic Violence Network and the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence and remain supportive of maintaining their funding in the AGO's budget. Overall, the AGO is pleased with the funding levels in this budget and would respectfully request that the committee maintain the current amounts.

## **FFR**

There is a technical provision in the current version of the budget that the AGO would like to maintain. The language codifies the current practices of the AGO Collections Section as it pertains to



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findings for recovery (FFR) issued by the Auditor of State. This language would help prevent some legal challenges in offsetting the income tax returns of public officials subject to FFRs.

## **Amendments Requested of the Ohio House of Representatives**

### **Changes to TOP COP**

While we are pleased with the current CPT language in HB 33, we have identified some areas that could be improved. Specifically:

- Allow for reimbursement of up to 40 hours of training for law enforcement entities that choose to supplement with additional CPT. Current law sets a 24-hour minimum for training.
- Increase the existing \$100,000 cap on administrative costs for OPOTC to properly administer this \$40 million program.
- Provide for a permanent funding source to ensure that advances in this area are not lost due to lack of funding in the future.

### **Charitable Law Holding Account**

The Attorney General's Charitable Law Section is requesting a separate holding account be established to facilitate smoother functions within the office. As the primary users of the AGO's General Holding Account (R004), establishing a separate account for the sole use of the Charitable Law Section will allow our staff to more efficiently track their deposits and withdrawals, in addition to enhancing auditing capabilities, as required by law. We respectfully request the support of the committee in adding this provision to HB 33.

### **Conclusion**

Chairman Miller and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to testify on behalf of the AGO. I would be happy to take any questions at this time.