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**Sponsor Testimony**

Senate Bill 21

Senate Judiciary Committee

January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Chairman Manning, and Ranking Minority Member Hicks- Hudson and members of the Senate Judiciary 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.

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. 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.

Previous General Assemblies have used Franklin County as the default setting for almost all appeals from agency actions, causing the courts in one county having outsized authority at the expense of those in the remaining 87.

There are several important notes to make about the provisions of this bill:

- It will not affect the jurisdiction of the Court of Claims to hear suits for damages against the State or its agencies.
- It will not affect the provisions of Senate Bill 22 that allow citizens to sue the state or its agencies in their home county.
- Jurisdiction will remain in Franklin County for cases involving non-Ohio residents or businesses with no Ohio place of business.

Lastly, similarly to House bill 286 from the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, it modifies the way that the State of Ohio can be involved in legal actions.

- It will allow 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 will also allow the Governor to do the same.
- 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 Manning, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Senator Reynolds and I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.