

Testimony in Support of HB 305

Lori M. Tyack, Clerk

Franklin County Municipal Court

Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing, April 17, 2024

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Lori Tyack, and I am the Clerk of Court for the Franklin County Municipal Court. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 305.

Technology has significantly impacted the way Ohio's clerks of court conduct their daily operations. It has improved not only our ability to maintain records, but to electronically share real-time data with the public and multiple agencies across the Justice System. Federal, State, and local agencies routinely request data for tracking criminal defendants on probation as well as recidivism rates. This information is extremely valuable for enacting effective criminal justice reform. Unfortunately, some of Ohio's municipal clerks of court do not have adequate funds to purchase sophisticated case management systems and often end up with home grown systems, some of which are unable to report data electronically.

The Franklin County Municipal Court is the largest municipal court in Ohio based on the volume of cases filed. As Clerk, one of my priorities is to move the Clerk's Office toward an electronic, paper-on-demand environment, which will improve access to justice for the public and all court users. Unfortunately, technology costs continue to increase, while the funds to maintain and improve systems continue to dwindle.

An example of this occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cases and collection of court costs and fines were dramatically reduced. Yet technology costs continued to skyrocket. The decrease in the assessment and collection of court costs during this time had a long-term negative impact on the Clerk's Computer Fund.

Fast forward four years. Evictions in Franklin County are at a twenty-year high and the majority of other case types have now reached or exceeded pre-pandemic levels. It is becoming more challenging to meet the needs of the public without the use of additional technology. The public also deserves more. My office has had requests for more online services, interactive websites, and case information with images.

We need your help. The passage of HB 305 would allow municipal court clerks to collect up to \$20.00 to support their technology efforts.

I realize that the burden to fund Ohio's Courts should not always fall on those who appear in court but should instead be shared by the community served to ensure fairness, equity, public trust, and confidence in the justice system. But this change would help balance funding between users and the community.

Thank you for your time and attention. I believe House Bill 305 will help clerks of court meet the increasing technology needs across Ohio. I encourage you to pass H.B. 305 so we can put our best foot forward in serving the public.