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Good morning, Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify today on the Attorney General Office's budget for FY26-FY27. The budget my office has prepared is built upon the responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars in addition to growing our reliance on self-generating revenue from our Collections Enforcement team.

Overview

The FY26-FY27 budget appropriates \$490.4 million in fiscal year 2026, and \$506.1 million in fiscal year 2027 to enable the AGO to accomplish our critical goals. These amounts represent a 0.5% increase from the fiscal year 2025 estimated end budget, and a 3.2% increase for fiscal year 2027. These amounts exceed the request my office set forth in its submission to the Office of Budget and Management late last year. My request would have realized a 3.0% decrease in funding in FY26 and a 1.85% increase in funding for FY27. Much of the increase in spending, as proposed by the Governor, are correlated to the new marijuana expungement program utilizing a portion of the marijuana excise tax.

I am not opposed to the Governor's changes. We are confident that the proposed amounts are sufficient to support the services provided by the 1,600 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.

I'd like to begin with a high-level overview of the two fund groupings which represent the majority of expenditures by the office.

General Revenue Fund Expenditures

Throughout my time serving as the Attorney General, much effort has been made to invest in the critical infrastructure which supports the core operations of the office, in addition to being a force multiplier for law enforcement. The bulk of the spending in this fund group supports the operating expenses of the office including personnel, office space, and most importantly, our state-of-the-art facilities and team at the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigations (BCI). However, one-third of all taxpayer funds in this fund group are passthrough dollars that are being sent back directly into communities across the state to support victims of crime, improve safety in our schools, and to bolster law enforcement.

Dedicated Purpose Fund Expenditures

The largest amount of funding for the office is concentrated in this fund group, which is largely backed through a variety of fees paid directly to the office or derived from other non-taxpayer revenue sources. The largest single fund which has seen significant growth during my time in office is Fund 4190 also known as the Claims Fund. This fund receives fees associated with the Collections Enforcement Section's work in collecting unpaid taxes and other debts owed to the state on behalf of our state agency clients and other public sector partners. Year after year, our team is breaking records and working hard to return these funds to state agencies to restore funding to their respective budgets. The office collected \$564.6 million in FY23, \$581.5 million in FY24, and \$292.3 million in FY25 to this point. Because of this success we have been able to move more institutional expenses onto Fund 4190 and off the General Revenue Fund.

I'd now like to highlight other areas of interest within our budget.

Law Enforcement Training

For the past two budgets, I have been a strong supporter of fully funding annual training for Ohio's 31,000 peace officers through a permanent non-GRF funding stream. Over the past four years, the legislature has dedicated over \$70 million in GRF toward these efforts. I applaud Governor DeWine's leadership in dedicating a portion of marijuana excise taxes to support up to \$40 million per year in annual training.

By way of background, peace officers are required to complete a minimum of 24 hours of continuing professional training (CPT) every year but are eligible to be reimbursed for up to 40 hours of CPT. Training is frequently offered locally at department headquarters and more recently, across the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission's six accredited regional training providers. The regional training approach has been a focal point of my administration to ensure departments are able to access relevant and affordable training without requiring their officers to travel far from home. I would strongly encourage this committee to maintain the permanent funding stream via the marijuana excise tax to continue to show our support for our local law enforcement partners.

Conclusion

Chairman Stewart and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to testify on behalf of the Attorney General's Office. I would be happy to take any questions at this time.