



State Representative Ismail Mohamed

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 101.

HB 101 creates the Law Student Encouragement Scholarship Pilot Program, an initiative designed to support underrepresented students pursuing admission to law school. This bill appropriates \$350,000 in FY 2027 through the Department of Higher Education to be administered by the Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA).

Under this pilot, the OSBA will establish application criteria, select an initial cohort of 10 to 20 full-time Ohio undergraduate students, and provide each of them with a \$4,000 scholarship per academic year. These students will also benefit from mentorship, exposure to legal career pathways, academic support, LSAT preparation materials, and registration fee coverage for the LSAT exam.

Importantly, the OSBA will submit a detailed report by January 30, 2028, to the Chancellor of Higher Education and the relevant House and Senate committee leaders. This report will evaluate the outcomes, expenses, and overall impact of the program.

As of 2021, Ohio had approximately 38,354 registered attorneys, with a particularly low attorney-to-population ratio in rural counties. Many of these areas struggle to attract and retain attorneys, which raises concerns about equitable access to legal representation—especially for public defense. By investing in a more diverse pipeline of law students, HB 101 not only promotes educational equity, but it also helps address the growing attorney shortage in underserved communities.

This bill is a targeted, forward-thinking investment in the future of Ohio's legal system, its workforce, and its commitment to equitable access to justice. I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of HB 101, and I'm happy to transfer to my joint sponsor Rep. Williams.

Thank you.