



Representative D.J. Swearingen
89th House District

Chairwoman King, Vice-Chair Kishman, Ranking Member Sims and Members of the House Local Government Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 412.

House Bill 412 is a simple bill designed to decrease costs by expressly allowing a village to contract with the county prosecuting attorney for legal services.

As the law currently stands, county prosecutors serve as the legal advisers for county officers, boards, townships, and a number of joint districts and authorities. These arrangements provide efficiency, consistency, and cost savings. However, villages have not been expressly included in this statutory framework, leaving them to rely on costly private legal counsel even when the county prosecutor often is well-suited to provide the same services.

House Bill 412 addresses this gap. It places villages on the same footing as other political subdivisions, by permitting them, at their discretion and with the approval of the county commissioners, to contract with the county prosecutor for legal services.

The benefits are clear:

- **Cost savings and efficiency:** Smaller villages often face budget constraints. This bill allows them to avoid duplicating expenses when competent legal services are already available through the county prosecutor's office.
- **Consistency in legal guidance:** By working with the county prosecutor, villages can ensure that their legal advice aligns with county-level interpretations and practices, reducing conflicts and inconsistencies.
- **Flexibility and local control:** Nothing in this bill requires a village to use the county prosecutor. It simply gives them the option, should they decide it is in the best interest of their residents.

This is a narrowly tailored reform, but one that provides real benefits for our local communities across Ohio. By clarifying the law, HB 412 empowers local officials to make choices that best suit their community while making more efficient use of taxpayer resources.

Chairwoman King, thank you for your consideration of this bill. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.