

SENECA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

FREDRICK W. STEVENS
Sheriff



CHARLES W. BOYER
Chief Deputy

Testimony to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee Seneca County Sheriff Fredrick Stevens HB 96 June 5, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government finance Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify on HB 96. I am Seneca County Sheriff Fredrick Stevens, and I am grateful for the opportunity to write to you about the financial needs that my office faces. I would like to ask you to please support a House provision of the budget removed in the Senate sub bill that requires the Ohio Department of Medicaid to submit for an 1115 Medicaid Waiver that would allow federal Medicaid dollars to be used to cover eligible health care costs for individuals incarcerated in our county jail— particularly those who are pre-trial and have not yet been convicted.

Many of the inmates in our jail struggle with identified mental health and/or substance abuse disorders that qualify for Medicaid coverage. But current law does not allow those disorders to be covered by Medicaid if the person is incarcerated. In order for the person to receive the treatment they need, the jail must fund the treatment. This places an immense and unjust strain on our budget.

Inmate medical treatment costs continually increase. In 2020, my office budgeted \$40,000 for inmate medical expenses. By the end of the year, we spent over \$76,000, nearly double our annual estimate and allotment. The next year, in 2021, my office doubled the inmate medical expense budget to \$80,000, and our estimate was still not sufficient. That year, we spent over \$91,000 on medical expenses. In 2024, we budgeted \$75,000 and spent over \$83,000.

A jail's medical expenses are compounded by hidden costs, such as \$75,000 annually we pay for weekly physician visits for nonemergency medical needs, as well as the hidden cost of funding the services of a medical billing company to manage our medical bills. The company reviews our medical bills, recodes the services, and resubmits them to the hospital or other medical facility. For example, we received bills totaling \$389,697.06 for just one repeat offender inmate whose treatments would be covered by Medicaid if he was not incarcerated. The medical billing company managed to decrease the costs to \$19,967.54. That is a tremendous savings, but it is still an astronomical amount of money absorbed into our budget, and it does not include the fee we paid to the medical billing service.

Each year, we must ask the Seneca County Commissioners for additional funding to cover ever-increasing medical costs. If those treatments were funded by federal Medicaid dollars, the savings within our budget could provide for better overall care for our inmates, improving quality of life for them and freeing local dollars for a wider scope of use.



3040 S. State Route 100
Tiffin, Ohio 44883

(W) 419-447-3456
(F) 419-443-7939



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The Seneca County Jail is a 24/7/365 agency and the biggest drain on county expenses, and we are asking for your support on this priority.

Thank you for allowing me to testify about the needs we face at the Seneca County Jail.

Sincerely,
Seneca County Sheriff Fredrick Stevens



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