



BUCKEYE STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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Senator Susan Manchester, Chairwoman

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Proponent Testimony

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Chairwoman Manchester and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee. My name is Michael Simpson, Sheriff of Preble County. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, where I serve as Chairman of the Legislative Committee. Having served in law enforcement for the last 37 years and as Sheriff for the last 22 years, I want to take a moment to speak to you regarding the proposed biennium budget which is currently in the Senate for consideration.

Elected Officials Compensation

The BSSA supports language in the House version of the budget that would increase the compensation for locally elected officials by 3.25%, to 5% each year. Currently, compensation is set to be increased by 1.75% through 2028.

The increase requested in the House version would not be seen by officials until 2029, as we are unable to receive a pay increase during the term. Sheriffs across the state are falling behind in compensation in comparison to city chiefs, as well as line staff in many cases. Most Sheriffs are making less than many people within their organization.

We must ensure that compensation is commensurate with the duties of the office and that we are attracting the best candidates to be elected as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of their respective counties. Under the

PAST PRESIDENTS CURRENT SHERIFFS

2021
Keith A. Everhart
Hardin County

2019
Matthew J. Lutz
Muskingum County

2018
Michael L. Simpson
Preble County

2017
Mark Wasylshyn
Wood County

2016
Randy Thorp
Licking County

2007
Vernon P. Stanforth
Fayette County

current plan, our best and brightest would have to take a pay cut in order to assume the Office of Sheriff.

County Jail Construction / Renovation

The BSSA supports amendments to restore the Executive's version distribution of 25% of marijuana excise tax revenue for grants to fund the construction, renovation, or improvement of county jails, which was removed by the House.

Numerous counties in the state have been able to use both capital and GRF monies currently being distributed, to build new or renovate existing jails. Many jails in Ohio are aging and do not meet the needs of today's requirements, including the vast increase of inmates with mental health issues currently being housed in county jails. I suspect that some counties in Ohio may not meet current Bureau of Adult Detention standards related to infrastructure.

It is imperative that we strive to have an on-going revenue stream for counties to ensure that we can avoid these facilities falling into disrepair. Allowing facilities to get to that point creates liability issues for inmates, but more importantly the jail staff that are charged with keeping the public safe. Legislators and Sheriffs have worked successfully in addressing this issue and we are requesting that Ohio's investment in county jails continue.

MARCS Local Users Fees

The BSSA supports the House version of the budget which allocates \$10.5 million to offset some of the user fees for local users. Ohio's *Multi-Agency Radio Communications System*, or MARCS, is currently used as the

primary public safety communication system across Ohio, including 77 Sheriff's Office dispatch centers.

Interoperable communications is the backbone to any response to public safety issues. MARCS allows agencies to seamlessly communicate with other first responders in the event of an emergency. Without these funds, we risk losing this critical component and ability to communicate on scene, when time matters. Local users have embraced the partnership with the state on this, but we still have work to do. Some of the smallest fire departments and EMS agencies in the state are still struggling to budget for radio user fees.

Next Generation 9-1-1 User Fee

The BSSA supports the House version of the budget that increased the NG 9-1-1 user fee from 40 cents to 60 cents. This increase in funding will permit counties to invest and maintain technology associated with Ohio's mandate for 9-1-1 PSAP's to move to the NG 9-1-1 platform in (5) years, as required by law.

9-1-1 technology is constantly evolving, including the ability to locate a caller via a mapping system, text to 9-1-1 and the ability to send video of emergencies to 9-1-1 call centers. Without these critical funds, counties will not be able to make the investment to meet the needs of the public and requirements set forth by the state.

The Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association and Sheriffs across Ohio look forward to working with the Legislature to address these critical needs.