



www.lsc.ohio.gov

OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
and Drafting

Legislative Budget
Office

S.B. 204
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for S.B. 204's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Reynolds

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: Yes

Keegan Kennedy, Budget Analyst

Highlights

- Municipal and county courts and the clerks of those courts will experience an increase in workload and resultant expenses to suppress eviction case records. Some of these costs could be offset if the court imposes a fee to suppress these records, which is neither permitted or prohibited by the bill. It is unclear if these fees would fully offset the potential costs.
- Clerks of courts (municipal and county) will incur one-time costs, likely minimal, to update the forms used in summons for the recovery of residential premises.

Detailed Analysis

The bill requires that when an eviction proceeding is commenced, the court is to suppress any court record related to the action. If the plaintiff prevails on the merits and the tenant is evicted, the court records are no longer considered suppressed unless the parties to the action agree otherwise. If the defendant prevails in the action or the action is otherwise dismissed, the court records remain sealed. A “suppressed court record” means a court record that is accessible only to the following: (1) judges, (2) court staff, (3) a party to the case, (4) a party’s attorney, if applicable, (5) authorized judicial department staff, or (6) a person with a valid court order authorizing access to the court record.

The act of suppressing a record will likely create administrative costs to both the courts that handle evictions and the clerks of courts who maintain the records. Those costs will be commensurate with the case volume handled by each court. It is anticipated that the bill will result in a large number of records that could be subject to suppression for certain courts. If those records are currently maintained electronically, it is possible that certain technology upgrades will be needed. However, representatives of the Ohio Association of Municipal/County Court

Clerks (OAMCCC) indicate that they believe most courts would be able to accommodate the requirements under the bill. Increased expenses could be offset by the collection of fees and court costs, which are neither required nor prohibited by the bill.

The bill also requires that the summons provided to the defendant include notice that any records associated with the action are suppressed and not accessible to the public until an order is entered granting the plaintiff possession of the premises and if the plaintiff is granted possession of the premises, the court records may remain private if both parties agree to suppress the records. Clerks of courts are responsible for issuing summons and will incur one-time costs to update their current forms.

From 2015 through 2024, a total of 1,010,890 eviction cases were filed in municipal and county courts – an average of over 100,000 annually, or about 28.5% of all civil cases.¹

FNSB0204IN-136/zg

¹ The data, including drill-through data for each county, is available on the Ohio Supreme Court's website at supremecourt.ohio.gov and then selecting "Statistical Reporting" under the Court's menu and then "Data Dashboards."