

June 1, 2017

To: Members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

From: William Eckelberry, Seneca County Sheriff

Re: Substitute HB 49 - State Biennial Budget

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Finance Committee, I'm Bill Eckelberry, Seneca County Sheriff. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today regarding some critical issues contained in Sub House Bill 49 which impact county government.

Seneca County spans 545 square miles and over 56,000 residents. We are proud to serve all those who call it their home, also those who come to visit or are just passing by.

In each of Ohio's 88 counties, the Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer. We have probably one of the most extensive sets of responsibilities to those we serve. By statute we must provide Law Enforcement in the unincorporated portions of the county, Court Security and Service of Papers, Jail Operations, Extradition Process and Transportation of Prisoners. We also maintain a law enforcement presence in the incorporated portions as well.

Like my fellow 87 Sheriffs across this state, the demands in providing these services are forever increasing. While our nation deals with terrorist related events, threats and concerns every day, we here in Ohio are not immune to these concerns and we too have been impacted, yet we deal with a very local and real crisis every hour or everyday known as the opiate epidemic. Every county is being taxed by the opiate war and aftermath that this epidemic leaves on the backs of our local governments.

We are fortunate in Seneca County, we have a very active and productive Opiate Task Force. This group meets monthly and includes Judges, Prosecutors, DJFS, Health Department, Mental Health and Recovery Board, Tiffin & Fostoria Hospitals and Police Departments, treatment agencies, faith based groups and myself.

However, the financial strains on my office, which impact my officer's ability to keep our citizens safe, are tremendous. The Sheriff's Office utilizes 33% of the General Fund.

I anticipate the Sheriff's Office financial needs for 2018 will exceed this year's request, and while we have the Opiate Task Force, the predictions are that we are not out of the storm on this epidemic yet, and when we are, what will the next one be?

Over the last two years the Sheriff's Office assisted in transportation to and from treatment for both mental health and substance use disorders. Through collaboration with the treatment providers and the judicial system we were able to assist over **118** individuals struggling with addictions. Most of these individuals were able to receive Medication Assisted Treatment while still incarcerated. The recidivism rate is significantly lower for individuals receiving Medication Assisted Treatment while still incarcerated. **80%** have not been re-arrested and we consider access to treatment and re-entry services in the county jail as the significant factor. Unfortunately all these great services are putting a big burden on my budget, including transportation, overtime, and other administrative costs.

The county jail is the detox facility for Seneca County! There is no other detox facility in Seneca County. Over the last two years we had to prepare our staff to be equipped with the necessary skills to handle individuals going through withdraw from opiates or a Mental Health Crisis. Our cost continues to rise due to these addition and behavioral health needs in our community. Reducing our budget could eliminate the assistance we currently offer to individuals struggling with addictions and mental illness.

On the county level, safety services aren't usually the first cuts made, but how can those carrying the fiduciary responsibilities for the county prepare when every budget cycle the State funding streams are creatively cut again.

We can fight the local war on opiates, or whatever the next epidemic will be, but as an extension of the services of this great state, we shouldn't have to be at battle to expect consistency in the taxpayers' dollars that are to provide services for all citizens. Replacing the revenue lost from the elimination of the sales tax on Medicaid managed care services is a critical component impacting our counties' ability to maintain revenue stability. The projected loss of 8.4% of Seneca County's Sales Tax Revenue (over \$700,000) will weigh heavy on all County operations.

The opiate epidemic is driving my jail population to new levels and I am on the brink of needing to seriously consider a jail expansion or becoming an outbound needy facility. I also have an obligation to continue to fight crime and serve the justice system with its' increasing case load, due to the opiate epidemic. The recurring impact is very real, a high percentage of the cases heard in our local courtrooms are connected to the drug issue. We have to be able to have the manpower and services to stay a step ahead in this game and it takes the local effort to combat this problem.

So, respectfully, on behalf of the over 56,000 residents, I ask that you find a way to REPLACE the Medicaid Managed Care Organization sales tax revenue to avoid counties having to reduce the funding for those serving on the front lines in public service.

Again, thank you for allowing me to speak today.