



**House Criminal Justice Committee
Judge Jenifer Overmyer
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 226
October 12, 2021**

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to submit proponent testimony for House Bill 226 on behalf of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges.

I am Judge Jenifer Overmyer from the Preble County Juvenile and Probate Court, where I have served since 2015. Prior to that, I served as a magistrate for 15 years. I am the President of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges and a member of the Ohio Judicial Conference's Juvenile and Probate Law and Procedure Committees.

The Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges consists of common pleas judges having juvenile court jurisdiction. The Association promotes the common business interests of Ohio juvenile court judges and provides leadership for a just and effective juvenile court system throughout the state of Ohio.

Juvenile courts appoint guardians ad litem (GALs) to assist the court in determining what is in a minor child's best interest. Many juvenile courts also work with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), a network of local volunteers who serve as the voice of children who have been abused or neglected. The OAJCJ supports H.B. 226 for its recognition that GALs and CASAs are integral to juvenile courts and deserve protection from intimidation under the law. Many juvenile courts report shortage of GALs. We hope H.B. 226 will help ensure the safety of current GALs and CASAs and serve as a recruitment tool moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 226. We ask that you pass this important bill for children and juvenile courts. We thank the sponsors, Representative Miller and Representative Pavliga, for carrying this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.