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209 East State Street • Columbus, Ohio 43215-4309  
Phone: 614-221-5627 • Fax: 614-221-6986  
Toll Free: 888-757-1904 • [www.ccao.org](http://www.ccao.org)

Cheryl Subler, Executive Director

**Senate General Government Budget Committee  
House Bill 110 – Proponent Testimony**

**Julie Ehemann  
Shelby County Commissioner**

**May 5, 2021**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate General Government Budget Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of the indigent defense reimbursement appropriations contained in House Bill 110. My name is Julie Ehemann; I serve as a Shelby County Commissioner and I am speaking here today on behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO).

CCAO's primary legislative priority for this budget cycle is 100 percent reimbursement for indigent defense services. Ohio's counties collectively incur tens of millions of dollars in costs every year fulfilling the state's constitutional obligation to provide legal counsel to indigent defendants. This mandate places considerable pressure on county general fund budgets.

Counties have advocated for many years to increase indigent defense reimbursement. The DeWine Administration and General Assembly made significant progress in this area in House Bill 166 of the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly. In State Fiscal Year 2021, counties were projected to receive a reimbursement of approximately 90 percent, but COVID-19-related state budget reductions lowered reimbursement rates to between 70 and 75 percent.

In Gov. DeWine's 2022-2023 executive budget proposal, additional funds were provided to raise the projected reimbursement rate to 96 percent in SFY 2022 and 94 percent in SFY 2023. The House later provided an additional \$8.3 million in SFY 2022 and \$12.3 million in SFY 2023 to raise the projected reimbursement rate to 100 percent.

Counties are very appreciative and deeply grateful for these investments. CCAO strongly encourages the Senate to retain the indigent defense reimbursement appropriations as passed by the House. Doing so would fulfill CCAO's number one budgetary goal and alleviate counties of the funding obligation for this long-running mandate.

The actions taken in this budget will do much to shape the future of the state-county partnership. Counties are thankful for the support shown thus far in building a strong partnership for the betterment of all Ohioans, and we look forward to continuing that support with the help of the Ohio Senate.



Fax: 614-220-0209  
[www.corsa.org](http://www.corsa.org)



Fax: 614-229-4588  
[www.cebco.org](http://www.cebco.org)



Fax: 614-221-6986  
[www.ccao.org](http://www.ccao.org)

I thank you for your time and consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me.