State Representative Jim Butler

41st House District

House Bill 409 – Sponsor Testimony before the House Criminal Justice Committee; Tuesday, December 5th, 2017.

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for this opportunity to offer sponsor testimony for House Bill 409 along with my joint sponsor, Representative Rick Perales.

This is a very straightforward piece of legislation, the intent of which is to increase access to veterans treatment court programs by permitting courts of common pleas and municipal courts in jurisdictions with smaller populations or limited resources to contract with a court in a larger jurisdiction to divert certain criminal defendants to participate in a veterans treatment court.

Veterans treatment courts currently operate in several counties around Ohio, and they do tremendously useful work to assist veterans in getting desperately needed treatment while still imposing stringent guidelines as punishment for their criminal transgressions. However, many rural and sparsely populated counties currently lack the capacity to run such programs independently. House Bill 409 will allow courts and counties around the state that might not have the resources or capacity, or maybe only have one or two cases involving a veteran each year, to create partnerships with larger counties so those veterans can get the help they need. Veterans treatment court programs are voluntary, and they have many strict parameters. Veterans who find themselves in these types of situations are sometimes suffering from serious mental or physical health problems stemming from their sacrificial service. I think we owe it to these men and women to help them however we can, and this bill takes another simple but important step in that direction.

Chairman Manning, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am happy to answer the committee's questions at this time, or to yield while Rep. Perales offers his testimony. Thank you.