

# PIKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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## **Members of the Board of Commissioners**

**Tony Montgomery, Chairman**

**Blaine Beekman**

**Jerry Miller**

**April Elliott, Clerk**

**Angie Burggraf, Secretary**

March 22, 2019

House Criminal Justice Committee  
Pike County Commissioners  
Testimony in support of HB 85

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. I am Pike County Commissioner Tony Montgomery and along with my two fellow commissioners Jerry Miller and Blaine Beekman we are here to ask for your support for House Bill 85, The Extreme Capitol Case Funding Bill.

We want to thank our Representative Shane Wilkin and his co-sponsor Representative John Rogers for the leadership they have taken in recognizing the challenges smaller counties confront when presented with a uniquely terrible situation such as ours and developing this legislation in response.

Pike County has a population of approximately 28,000 residents, our County General Fund budget is approximately \$10 million, and we have already spent \$600,000 on the investigation of these crimes. We are thankful for the assistance that the state has already provided by reimbursing \$130,000 of these costs, however, we are still left with a balance of \$470,000 and have seen estimates of the cost of the trials ranging from four million to ten million dollars. Pike County simply does not have the financial resources or any discretionary funds to allocate to this obligation.

We want to acknowledge the incredible job that the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Ohio Attorney General's Office has done to bring the apparent perpetrators to justice. The Attorney General's Office along with the Pike County Prosecutor are pursuing the cases in court. Even if the death penalty specification is removed, however, the cost of preparing and trying these cases will not be lessened.

Our circumstances have unfortunately demonstrated that Ohio lacks the ability to provide adequate financial assistance for prosecution or indigent defense in Capital cases like ours.

HB 85 will create a process to allow Ohio's counties to petition the State for financial assistance for capital cases that include multiple victims or defendants and have an estimated cost of a trial that exceeds five percent of a county's budget for the year in which the case is prosecuted. The process will allow a county to petition the State and receive state support in managing a situation that would otherwise place the county in financial distress, if not threaten financial ruin.

We can assure you that if HB 85 is passed we will seek to be good stewards of any funds sent to Pike County for these trials and demonstrate that we are worthy recipients of your foresight, trust and support.

Thank you for allowing us to appear before your committee today. Pike County asks for your support of this legislation. We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.