



Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association

Louis Tobin
Executive Director
House Bill 5
Interested Part Testimony
June 19, 2019

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer interested party testimony on the proposed amendment to House Bill 5 to create an indigent defense task force for the purpose of studying Ohio's indigent defense system and to provide recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the delivery, structure, and funding of indigent defense. Our interest in this amendment is simple – we wish only to have an appointment to the task force.

We have not taken a position on House Bill 5 despite the fact that I, personally, wish the General Assembly would offer assistant prosecutors, who are also often woefully underpaid, particularly in rural Ohio, a similar benefit. We have offered our support to the County Commissioners Association of Ohio and to the legislature as they, and you, seek to fully reimburse counties for the costs of indigent defense. And we are not asking you to refrain from creating a task force to study these issues. We are merely asking for a seat at the table so that we may have input along with the governor, the attorney general, judges, defense lawyers, the state bar association, county commissioners, and legislators on an issue that impacts state government, county government, and the criminal justice system in Ohio. We are asking only to have a seat at the table for a discussion that seemingly includes representatives of the rest of the legal community in Ohio and that will inevitably impact the work of prosecuting attorneys.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I do hope that you can grant this small request. I would be happy to answer any questions.