Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee.  I am honored to be joined by my colleague Rep. John Rodgers to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 85, The Extreme Capitol Case Funding Bill.

On the night of April 21 into the morning hours of April 22, 2016, 8 members of a Pike County family were murdered.  Christopher Rhoden Jr. 16, Hanna Rhoden 19, Hannah Gilley 20, Clarence “Frankie” Rhoden 20, Dana Rhoden 37, Gary Rhoden 38, Christopher Rhoden Sr. 40 and Kenneth Rhoden 44.  Each victim except for one had multiple gunshot wounds.  For the next two and a half years Families in rural southern Ohio lived in fear and confusion while trying to comprehend how such a terrible act of violence could have happened in their small rural community.  Finally, on November 13, 2018 6 individuals were arrested for this crime with 4 of those six being indicted for murder with Capital offense specifications.  As the State and the Defense prepare for trial for a case of this magnitude, a glaring fact is that Ohio is not positioned nor do we have a process in place that provides adequate financial assistance for prosecution or indigent defense in Capital cases like this.

Members of the committee, justice cannot be available only to those that can afford a proper defense or for counties that have the means to adequately prosecute crimes such as this.  Therefore, the need for this Bill.

  This bill is about justice. This bill establishes a procedure for counties needing to seek financial assistance from the State that is inclusive of the State Attorney General as well at the State Public Defender with final approval of funding coming from the State Controlling board.  The General Assembly would be irresponsible stewards of taxpayer dollars if it were to simply write a check to a county without addressing the serious structural concerns under existing law which this Bill does.  This Bill has received input from The Attorney General’s office, Public Defender, Prosecutors Association and the County Commissioners Association.  All of whom are supportive.