

5th House District

Columbiana County

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Chair Hillyer, Vice-Chair Grendel, Ranking Member Galonski and members of the House Civil Justice Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 613 – to abolish the East Liverpool Municipal Court in Columbiana County.

Currently, the East Liverpool Municipal Court oversees the City of East Liverpool along with St. Clair and Liverpool Townships – a population of around 21,000 people. All remaining areas of Columbiana County fall under the jurisdiction of the County Municipal Court. Earlier this year, with a vacancy in the East Liverpool Municipal Court’s judgeship, local leaders decided to re-evaluate the necessity of this court based on the cost it brings to the city and the limited caseload which is heard each year.

Over the last decade, the Court has cost the City of East Liverpool an average of just over \$300,000 per year. Even when factoring in fees lost by dissolving the Court, relieving East Liverpool from this burden would save the city well over \$100,000 each year. As a rebuilding Appalachian city which has seen a 62% decline in population in the last 50 years to 9,958 residents, these savings would be an invaluable addition to the city’s budget. It was also important to determine whether consolidation would bring an undue burden on the County Municipal Court. An analysis from the Ohio Supreme Court looked at how the County Municipal Court’s incoming caseload per judge would compare to all other municipal courts across Ohio with a full-time judgeship. While factoring in the cases from consolidation, the Columbiana County Municipal Court would hear Civil, Criminal and Traffic Cases at the 62nd, 21st and 42nd percentiles, in total placing the workload at just the 36th percentile. It is clear that they would be able to handle these additional cases. The change would also preserve East Liverpool’s Specialized Drug Court, a valuable social service which one of the County judges is qualified to adopt.

For these reasons, I am asking for your support to consolidate the East Liverpool Municipal Court into the Columbiana County Municipal Court. The County Municipal Court is conveniently located centrally within the county, around 20 minutes from downtown East Liverpool. This would allow for a single court to hear all municipal cases within Columbiana County while reducing the financial strain on the City of East Liverpool. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to take any questions.