

May 29, 2022

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Civil Justice Committee:

I am writing this letter of support as the Victim's Advocate for the City of East Liverpool Law Director's office.

My job is also threatened with the possible closing of the East Liverpool Municipal Court. But that is not my only concern. As the Victim's Advocate, I am very concerned about the victims of domestic violence whom I help. This area is an extremely Appalachian community. Most of these victims live in extreme poverty and will not have the resources to travel 30 minutes away to the Columbiana County Court in Lisbon, OH. We seem to be punishing the most downtrodden of our small town by seeking to abolish our court.

In my ten years of service here I have worked under several prosecutors/asst law directors. At no time, as stated by the current county prosecutor (who has only been in office for a year and a half and never comes to East Liverpool), have we ever had a prosecutor five days a week. The county always sent a prosecutor Tuesdays through Thursdays which is why you will notice these are the busiest days for the Court. Mondays and Fridays have always been reserved for arraignments and civil cases handled only by the Judge.

It was also stated that our court tried one criminal case since 2021. However, that case was actually 3 separate individuals on trial. Most of our scheduled jury trials are settled the week of, which is financially better for our court. Nothing was mentioned about the bench trials we have.

The time and attention is still the same as it was when I started in 2012. The only thing that has changed is that the assistant law director was the opponent of the current county prosecutor. Where once the prosecutor sent by the county three days a week was also paid by the city to be the Asst law director to handle the offenses written under the city codified ordinance and city civil cases, we now have a separate asst. law director and county prosecutor. This, in my belief, is all political.

It should also be noted, the current county prosecutor has always worked in Mahoning County and is used to a much larger City's caseloads. However, our court does have more case files than can fit in our arms. A few visiting County Prosecutors in the past have commented on how busy this Court is, especially on public defender days when there is no time for any kind of breaks. We take offense to the statements made. We

take our court, probation department, drug court, victims and our defendants very serious. Not a joking matter.

Our mayor states he wants to build this city up. We still have a pottery (Homer Laughlin though not actually in our city – owned by the mayor's in-laws), we have the New Castle School of Trade, the new restaurant (Cadence Vault Gastropub, a renovated century bank overlooking the river), a soon to open winery, an extension campus of Kent State University, City Hospital, Carnegie Library, Pottery City Antique Mall, Ceramic Museum, etc. So how do you explain a mayor who is not even running for a second term, attempting to pick the city apart bit by bit. It almost seems like public officials are purposely sabotaging the city.

Please vote no on this bill. If you are inclined to vote yes, please do not let it be based on the politics at play here.

Thank You for taking the time to read this testimony.
Tina Keller, Victim's Advocate for the City of East Liverpool