

Dear Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee,

Thank you for considering my written testimony in opposition to Sub. SB 21.

Senate Bill 21 allow Gov. DeWine, Senate President Huffman, and House Speaker Stephens to hire private legal teams (including law firms that may have helped write the laws) at taxpayer's expense (!) and with no limit on cost and very little oversight, to fight constitutional challenges to Ohio's laws and Constitution brought by Ohio citizens and entities. To make a bad bill worse, the bill gives the governor and the legislature an automatic right to intervene in court challenges to Ohio laws and the Constitution. Sub. SB 21 is a blatant attempt to disregard the concerns of Ohio citizens.

The state's ELECTED attorney general currently provides counsel to lawmakers. Why should Statehouse leaders have additional resources at unlimited taxpayer expense to give them an advantage over citizens and other entities challenging the constitutionality of laws? Our state, like our federal government, is supposed to be of, by and for "the people." It is "the people" who foot the bill and trust their leaders to operate in the people's best interests. It is "the people" who suffer when their leaders misuse taxpayer funds.

Ohio has a transparency problem. Attorney-client privilege between a private attorney and our Governor, Senate President, or House Speaker is the antithesis of the sort of transparency we need now.

The Householder scandal is still not behind us, since HB 6 STILL has yet to be completely repealed. And how many leaders currently serving the state have so far escaped accountability for this scandal? Also, ECOT still owes the state \$17 million, and who in our state's leadership have benefitted from this scam? Taxpayers continue to pay the price for the lack of transparency and accountability in our state.

Sub. SB 21 is another scandal waiting to happen – a scandal Ohio can ill afford if it cares to ditch the title of "most corrupt state."

In short, Sub. SB 21 is a power grab and a clear violation of our state's separation of powers. It MUST NOT move forward.

I urge committee members to remember the oath of office they took and WHO THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO SERVE. Please work, instead, to create transparency in our state.

Sincerely,
Deborah K. Cooper
Worthington, OH