



# BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

DIANE WARD    BARBARA MOORE    KELLY JONES

June 12, 2023

The Honorable Justin Pizzulli  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215-6111

Dear Representative Pizzulli:

The Adams County Board of Commissioners fully supports the critically needed addition of a Probate and Juvenile Division Judge for Adams County. Our county is one of the four Ohio counties, along with Morgan, Noble and Wyandot counties, which have only one Common Pleas Court Judge to serve their citizens. It is noteworthy that Adams County's population is 20% larger than the next largest county, Wyandot, which has only one Common Pleas Court Judge. There are sixteen counties in Ohio with a population of less than 30,000 citizens. Seven of those counties, which are smaller in population in comparison to Adams County, already have two Common Pleas Court Judges.

The need for an additional Common Pleas Court Judge (Probate and Juvenile) originated in 2010 when an Adams County "Judge Committee" formed to explore the creation of an additional court. The current Adams County Common Pleas Court Judge, The Honorable Brett M. Spencer, was part of the "Committee" and supported the second judgeship.

Since 2010 the Adams County Juvenile Court's abuse, neglect and dependency docket has exploded exponentially. According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (OJFS), participants in abuse and dependency cases have increased over 300% in Adams County. Since 2010 the number of Temporary Custody Cases, where children have to be removed from a home to ensure their safety, has risen over 390% in our county. Judge Spencer in recent correspondence attributed the Court's substantial scheduling issues to the "**catastrophic increase**" in abuse, neglect, and dependency actions. The time for debate has ended and the time for action is upon this Board and the State Legislature. Simply put -- the most vulnerable segment of Adams County's population -- our children -- are at risk -- and deserve a full-time judge and court devoted to their health, welfare, and safety.

The Adams County Board of County Commissioners are committed to, and have ready, the financial resources and office space to accommodate a full-time Probate and Juvenile Court Judge. We respectfully request the Ohio Legislature to take swift action in creating this additional Probate and Juvenile Court Judge. This Board looks forward to collaborating with you to protect our children.

Respectfully yours,

Teresa Diane Ward, President

215 NORTH CROSS STREET  
SUITE 102  
WEST UNION, OHIO 45693  
(937) 544-3286 ~ ADAMSCOUNTYOH.COM

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**LETTER OF SUPPORT/PROBATE/JUVENILE JUDGE:  
RESOLUTION NO. 2023-303**

It was moved by Kelly Jones and seconded by Diane Ward to approve a Letter of Support for the addition of an Adams County Juvenile/Probate Judge to be sent to the Ohio State House of Representatives signed by President Ward on behalf of the county.

It has been brought to the board's attention that the number of juveniles in custody over the past 13 years has nearly quadrupled. The Board of Commissioners states the county is in a financial position that was not available in 2010 when the initial Judge committee met. It is the opinion of the Board that a full-time Judge will protect the most vulnerable segment of Adams County's population, our children.

There was no discussion and upon the call of the roll the vote resulted as follows:

**VOTE: WARD, AYE**

**MOORE, AYE**

**JONES, AYE**  
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The undersigned, as Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners of Adams County, Ohio, does hereby certify that the foregoing resolution is a true and correct copy of the original resolution as adopted, on June 12, 2023 Journal 44 Page 68

Terri Crothers CLERK