



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Policy & Legislation

Corey Jordan
Director of Policy and Legislation
Ohio Attorney General's Office
April 19th, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, and Ranking Member Sykes.

Good Afternoon. First allow me to express the Attorney General's regrets in being unable to be with you in committee today. He is attending a conference in Philadelphia sponsored by the National Association of Attorneys General of which he was recently elected President. My name is Corey Jordan and I am the Director of Policy and Legislation for Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 33 and on the Attorney General Office's (AGO) budget for FY24-FY25.

We believe that, with a few additions, the budget you have before you will allow us to continue our mission of effectively and efficiently protecting Ohioans and upholding the rule of law. I'd like to spend a few brief minutes talking about how this budget allows us to meet these goals.

Overview

The current iteration of the budget appropriates \$437.2 million in fiscal year 2024, and \$433.9 million in fiscal year 2025 to enable the AGO to accomplish our critical goals. These amounts represent a 1.6% decrease from the fiscal year 2023 estimated end budget, and a 0.8% decrease for fiscal year 2025. We are confident that these amounts are sufficient to support the services provided by the 1,500 AGO staff across our 13 offices over the coming biennium, and we thank Governor DeWine for his consideration of our budget requests. We would respectfully request the Ohio Senate maintain our current funding levels.

Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI)

The Attorney General's Office is thankful for the General Assembly's support of BCI through the previous two budget cycles. In years past, the AGO has come before this committee seeking increases to support the critical work being done to support law enforcement and deliver justice. The primary funding mechanism is through GRF, background check fees, CHW related fees, and on the rare occasion, through court-ordered settlements. BCI continues to serve as a resource for local law enforcement answering each late-night call with the same urgency. 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, our team is answering the call to keep our communities safe. BCI also continues to respond to Officer Involved Critical Incidents which we highlighted last biennium. In 2021 BCI conducted 69 investigations, 59 investigations in 2022, and as of April 14th, we have had 20 investigations or requests for assistance in 2023. Each of these investigations takes 400 hours of work on average prior to presentation before a grand jury. This is not to suggest there are more or less incidents, but that our office's reputation for thoroughness and impartiality has significantly increased the demands on our office by local law enforcement. For these reasons and more, we urge the General Assembly to continue to support BCI's operations in our office's budget request.



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Policy & Legislation

Training Ohio's Police through Continuing Occupational Programming: (TOP COP)

In the previous budget, the General Assembly established a Law Enforcement Training Funding Study Commission (LETFSC) and a corresponding pilot program. This \$15 million pilot program has proven successful over the past year by reimbursing local law enforcement agencies at a 50% rate for the cost of continuing professional training (CPT) for Ohio's over 30,000 peace officers. The 134th General Assembly also supported the AGO's request for an additional \$5 million to ensure against any lapse in funding or training while this General Assembly considers our proposal for a permanent funding stream. The TOP COP initiative reflects the recommendations made by the LETFSC for a permanent program and funding structure based on the pilot program.

The language in the current version of the budget would codify the recommendations of the LETFSC by requiring a minimum of 24 hours of CPT annually. Mandatory training topics with corresponding minimum credit hours will be decided each year by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC), allowing local jurisdictions a level of flexibility in selecting topics for the remaining (nonmandatory) CPT topics. For 2023, OPOTC has set three mandatory training topics for an eight-hour total, allowing local entities to decide how to use the remaining 16 hours of training to best suit the needs of their unique communities. These topics must meet statutory requirements, be agency-approved, and achieve pre-approval by OPOTC. HB 33 provides \$40 million in GRF per fiscal year to support this effort on a quarterly reimbursement model. TOP COP is Attorney General Yost's top priority for this budget cycle, as the time is right to fully support and fund our law enforcement so that we may continue to have the nation's top cops.

Information Technology Updates

The AGO requested funding for a number of initiatives, utilizing one-time dollars to make necessary investments for upgrades in some of the office's aging, critical information technology infrastructure.

To support necessary technological upgrades to critical legacy systems, the AGO will utilize \$6.5 million over the biennium in one-time GRF to eliminate potential vulnerabilities. These funds will allow us to maintain compliance with federal rules and regulations, while minimizing security threats and reducing service and maintenance costs.

The AGO also plans to enhance the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway (OHLEG). The planned upgrades will substantially improve the capability of law enforcement entities to share information with one another. The enhancements will allow local agencies to access unprecedented levels of actionable information, better equipping them to protect communities. Additionally, the upgrades will allow the hundreds of agencies that rely on OHLEG's record management system to seamlessly transfer electronic copies of their casefiles to more than half of the county prosecutors in Ohio. The \$1.25 million appropriated toward this effort will also upgrade the system to integrate sex offender data to the over 300 law enforcement entities who utilize the system.



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Policy & Legislation

Lastly, the existing work of the BCI's Cyber Crime Unit will be expanded to combat cyber identity theft and other crimes with a \$1.5 million appropriation over the biennium.

Supporting Victims of Crime

The importance of the work done in the Crime Victims Services Section of the AGO cannot be overstated. Our Crime Victims Services team is responsible for administering Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds in the form of crime victim compensation awards. The AGO successfully advocated with other state attorney's general to fix the fundamental funding formula at the federal level to restore the continued cuts VOCA has endured over the past several years. While we anticipate the restoration of some of these federal VOCA funds in the next one to two years, the budget we submitted accounts for the wide range of needs to be addressed in this area up until that time.

Additionally, the AGO included additional funding for the Ohio Domestic Violence Network and the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence and remain supportive of maintaining their funding in the AGO's budget.

Overall, the AGO is pleased with the funding levels in this budget and would respectfully request that the Senate maintain the current amounts.

FFR

There is a technical provision in the current version of the budget that the AGO would like to maintain. The language codifies the current practices of the AGO Collections Section as it pertains to findings for recovery (FFR) issued by the Auditor of State. This language would help prevent legal challenges in offsetting the income tax returns of public officials subject to FFRs.

Amendments Requested

Changes to TOP COP

While we are pleased with the current CPT language in HB 33, we have identified several areas that could be improved. Specifically:

- Allow for reimbursement of up to 40 hours of training for law enforcement entities that choose to supplement with additional CPT. Current law sets a 24-hour minimum for training.
- Increase the existing \$100,000 cap on administrative costs for OPOTC to properly administer this \$40 million program.
- Provide for a permanent funding source to ensure that advances in this area are not lost due to lack of funding in the future.

Charitable Law Holding Account

The Attorney General's Charitable Law Section has requested a separate holding account be established to facilitate smoother functions within the office. As the primary users of the AGO's



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Policy & Legislation

General Holding Account (R004), establishing a separate account for the sole use of the Charitable Law Section will allow staff to more efficiently track their deposits and withdrawals, in addition to enhancing auditing capabilities, as required by law. We respectfully request the support of the committee in adding this provision to HB 33.

Conclusion

Chairman Dolan and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to testify on behalf of the AGO. I would be happy to take questions at this time.