



BUCKEYE STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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**Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Representing Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association
Sheriff Michael L. Simpson
Preble County Sheriff's Office**

June 8, 2023

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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Michael Simpson, and I am the Sheriff of Preble County. I'm here, on behalf of the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, to talk to you about several topics that are priorities for the sheriffs of Ohio in the 2024 / 2025 biennium operating budget. Also, I want to thank you for your support and consideration of our needs.

The funding request from Governor DeWine for the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction will directly affect the operation of county jails in Ohio. Sheriffs across the state deal with a high level of mental health issues daily. As you know, most jails in Ohio are not designed or equipped to house inmates of this nature, which increases liability to each county.

Inmates that may be taken to local hospitals spend minimal time there. They are then returned to the county jails. County jails are not staffed or equipped to handle inmates with a mental health diagnosis. Add to this, the fact that state facilities have no beds readily available when an inmate is in crisis. At times, we may wait days or weeks for a bed to open based on availability in our regions.

Sheriffs across Ohio are asking for your help to ensure the Ohio Department of Mental Health can continue their partnership with Ohio's Sheriffs. This is not the time to change direction in psychiatric care in our jails.

Ohio's Sheriffs are requesting the Ohio Senate to include funding within the biennium budget to fund, construct and adequately operate a NextGen 9-1-1 system in Ohio. Senators Wilson and Smith have been working diligently as

members of the state's ESINet Committee, to develop a plan to update the 9-1-1 landscape across Ohio. The longer we wait, the greater the challenge will be to bring Ohio to the level where it should be. We ask you to support us in this endeavor.

HB 33's original language included money over the biennium to provide counties funding to construct new jails and improve existing jails, where feasible. As I mentioned earlier, most jails in Ohio are not equipped to handle housing inmates with severe mental health illness. Many jails in Ohio are at the minimum, in need of enhancements and improvements, and many also need to be replaced. The Ohio Legislature has been a partner with counties in Ohio in past budgets, and we ask the Senate to continue that success by restoring funding levels to the level approved by the House.

Finally, we are asking the Senate to restore to the budget, the House approved dollars for MARCS, Ohio's public safety emergency communications system. Today, this system provides seamless interoperability between state and local partners with more than 145,000 radios, including 74 of the 88 Sheriffs using the platform as their primary emergency communications every day. The funding would eliminate the standard local fees for MARCS system and in FY'24, install and maintain a P-25 compliant ISSI for MARCS and non-MARCS interoperability. The local fee elimination would assist agencies that cannot afford to be on the system to do so and will assist cash-strapped small and volunteer public safety agencies to remain on the system.

The Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association and Sheriffs across Ohio look forward to working with you to continue to strengthen our partnership and to provide the best public safety services to the Citizens of Ohio.

Thank you for your time today. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.