



# News Release

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## **Shelby County Commissioner and CCAO Executive Committee Member Julie Ehemann Testifies on Substitute House Bill 33**

COLUMBUS, OH – Today, Shelby County Commissioner and CCAO Executive Committee Member Julie Ehemann testified in front of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee on the Senate’s substitute bill for House Bill 33. In her testimony, Ehemann expressed CCAO’s appreciation for the investments made and maintained thus far in the Senate version of Substitute HB 33. As we continue to work with the Senate to strengthen the state-county partnership, CCAO’s three key priorities remain consistent: ensuring full state reimbursement for indigent defense costs, continued funding for vital county jail projects, and a restoration of the Local Government Fund.

### **Full State Reimbursement for Indigent Defense**

Indigent defense reimbursement continues to be one of CCAO’s critical priorities, and additional funding is still needed to adequately fund the program. Ehemann urged the Senate to increase funding by \$18 million in FY24 and \$23 million in FY 25. She also highlighted CCAO’s request to restore language related to rate freezes, which would give counties consistent funding.

“Indigent defense is a constitutionally mandated service that the state is required to provide and that service was delegated to the counties to deliver at the local level,” said Ehemann. The option to contract with OPD (State Public Defender) must be available in order for counties to have flexibility in determining how to best implement services locally.

### **Next Generation 9-1-1**

Ehemann commended the \$46 million included in the current version of HB 33 while stressing the importance of enacting statutory language for implementation and to ensure sustainable funding for the program. CCAO and other organizations have been working with Senators Wilson and Smith on language in Senate Bill 50, which builds upon NG 9-1-1 language included in the House passed version of the budget while providing funding to operate the system through a 64-cent monthly user fee.

### **Local Government Fund**

Ehemann expressed CCAO’s support to increase The Local Government Fund to 2.50% of GRF tax revenue from the current budget’s version of 1.70%. At a minimum, CCAO requests that the LGF be increased to 1.85% in order to offset the impact of an estimated \$1.5 billion in tax deductions.

### **Jail Funding**

CCAO is grateful for the \$75 million currently allocated for jail construction and renovation included in HB 33. While this is an increase beyond the Governor’s Executive budget and Ehemann showed

appreciation for the Senate's recognition of the importance of the funding, she also pointed out that it is a decrease from the House's version of the budget which allocated \$100 million. CCAO respectfully requests that the Senate restores the amount to the House-Passed levels to ensure more counties can improve their jails.

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The County Commissioners Association of Ohio advances effective county government for Ohio through legislative advocacy, education and training, technical assistance and research, quality enterprise service programs, and greater citizen awareness and understanding of county government.