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# STATEHOUSE REPORT

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## Medicaid fraud package passes without inclusion of SNAP

On Monday, the House Medicaid Committee adopted a third [substitute bill](#) to [House Bill 795](#) (Representative Josh Williams), the legislation aimed at addressing fraud in the Medicaid program. The new language removed provisions CCAO opposed regarding SNAP that would have eliminated Ohio's use of broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE). Thank you to CCAO members who advocated against this provision.

On Wednesday, the House Finance Committee amended the [Medicaid fraud provisions](#) into [Senate Bill 315](#) (Senators Tim Schaffer and Hearcel Craig), a bill aimed at addressing SNAP EBT benefit card skimming by requiring new and replacement cards to be upgraded to chip-enabled cards. [A full summary of the legislation is available here.](#)

CCAO testified in support of SB 315 prior to the inclusion of the Medicaid provisions.

The House Finance Committee voted SB 315 out by a unanimous vote.

During the committee process, the \$2.5 million appropriation to pay for the new EBT chip-enabled cards was removed from SB 315 and added to the budget corrections bill vehicle, [House Bill 479](#) (Representative Jean Schmidt).

SB 315 passed the House by a vote of 85-10 and the Senate concurred on the changes. The bill now heads to Governor DeWine.

HB 479 passed the Senate by a vote of 33-0 and the House concurred on the changes, also sending it to the governor.

Members with questions should contact Rachel Reedy at [rreedy@ccao.org](mailto:rreedy@ccao.org).

The following two articles include more information regarding the omnibus amendments to HB 479.

## **Post traumatic stress fund for first responders structure expanded in budget cleanup bill**

[HB 479](#), the omnibus bill discussed in the prior and subsequent articles, includes provisions that expand the law around the administration of the Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) Fund.

The PTS fund, originally created in December 2020 and funded in last year's HB 184, will be used to reimburse public safety officers for out-of-pocket costs of therapeutic or medical services treating a post-traumatic stress injury without an accompanying physical injury that arises out of the officer's employment. HB 479 gives appropriation authority for the \$40 million in the PTS Fund.

The provisions included in HB 479 set up the administration of the fund and program under the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH). It creates a PTS Fund Commission comprised of the directors of the Office of Budget and Management, DBH, and Bureau of Workers' Compensation, as well as a member representing firefighters, a member representing peace officers, and a mental health professional. Employers do not have representation on the commission. The commission is responsible for adopting rules to administer the PTS fund, including procedures for applying for and receiving reimbursement.

The commission must issue an annual report to the governor and the legislature on the use of the fund, the health and employment outcomes of public safety officers using the fund, the solvency of the fund, and proposed statutory changes for assisting public safety officers sustaining PTS injuries. The report must include whether the fund should be continued, expanded, or modified.

Reimbursement from the fund is capped at \$50,000 per injury with the ability to reimburse more if the officer provides evidence of expenses above the cap and the commission determines the funds are available.

There is currently no authority for the state to require employers to pay into the fund; instead, it limits reimbursement payments to the appropriation provided.

CCAO will continue conversations with the legislature and DBH regarding employer involvement in the PTS Fund commission process.

HB 479 was voted out of the Senate, concurred on by the House, and now heads to the governor for signature. See the next article for additional information on other HB 479 provisions.

Members with questions should contact Rachel Reedy at [reedy@ccao.org](mailto:reedy@ccao.org).

## **Omnibus HB 479 amendment contains various provisions of note to counties**

As part of the General Assembly's final push this week, the Senate [adopted an omnibus amendment](#) to [House Bill 479](#) (Representative Jean Schmidt). The omnibus amendment included funding for the transition to SNAP EBT chip cards and included programmatic language for the PTS Fund, as discussed in the prior two articles.

The omnibus amendment contained 25 individual amendments, some of which were discussed above and some that did not have a county nexus.

The numbers in each header are the amendment numbers in the omnibus document listed above. To directly find any specific amendment, we recommend you search the document for the numbers.

### **Budget Surplus and One-Time Boosted Homestead Exemption (0848-4)**

Possibly the most notable amendment concerns the allocation of \$1.2 billion of SFY 2026 surplus revenue.

Of the surplus, \$350 million is allocated to the Property Tax Relief Fund for the purposes of a one-time boosted homestead exemption. County auditors will be required to certify the number of homestead exemption recipients in their county to the Department of Taxation no later than November 1, 2026.

Each of these homestead recipients will receive a one-time boosted homestead reduction equal to the \$350 million figure divided by the total number of recipients. For example, if the certifications from the county auditors shows that there are 700,000 homestead exemption recipients across the state, each will receive an additional \$500 tax reduction in their first-half tax bill in 2027.

The \$350 million will then be used to reimburse local taxing entities for the foregone revenue.

The remaining surplus revenue will be distributed as follows:

- \$320 million to the Expanded Sales Tax Holiday Fund
  - To be used for an expanded sales tax holiday on August 1 through August 15, 2027.
- \$310 million to the Health and Human Services Fund
  - To be used as a reserve fund for the Medicaid program.
- \$200 million to the Debt Service Reduction Fund
  - To be used to support appropriations made in the capital budget in lieu of issuing debt and, if the Director of Budget and Management deems it appropriate, to retire existing debts.
- \$35 million to the Budget Stabilization Fund

Any remaining surplus after the aforementioned transfers will remain in the state General Revenue Fund.

### **Economic Development Assistance and Public Records (0815)**

The bill amends language in R.C. 9.66 that took effect earlier this year that created a broad exemption from public records for any information pertaining to requests for economic development assistance.

Under the prior language, “information” submitted by applicants or recipients of economic development assistance (broadly defined) was considered confidential and not a public record. If a public official disclosed any “information,” they could have been held criminally liable.

The new language limits “information” to “individualized compensation and payroll information.”

This is a considerable narrowing of the scope of the disclosure limitation. CCAO is having ongoing conversations with other organizations on the interpretation of the new language. CCAO will share additional information as to how this narrowed limitation is to be implemented going forward.

### **Property Tax Administration Changes (0772-3, 0809, 0535-1)**

Several components of the omnibus amendment focused on procedural revisions to property tax administration to ensure that the reforms made over the last two years work together properly.

#### *0772-3: Inflation cap across county lines*

The bill changes the definition of “taxes charged and payable” to reflect the taxes calculated before any reductions due to reduction factors, credits, or any other provision of the Revised Code are applied.

The bill also modifies how the inflationary cap on inside millage applies to subdivisions that cross county lines. While not an issue that directly affects counties, it will affect constituents.

Instead of the properties having the inflation limit calculated when their individual counties go through their next reappraisal/update cycle, all the property in the subdivision will have their cap calculated based on the cycle of the county where the plurality of the subdivision’s taxable value is located.

For example, if a school district crosses the border between County A and County B, and the majority of the district’s taxable value base is in County B, then the inflation cap for the district’s inside millage will be calculated when County B goes through its reappraisal / update cycle. The calculated cap will then also apply to the residents of County A who reside in the school district.

This change will ensure uniform taxation throughout individual subdivisions but may also increase taxpayer confusion as their taxes attributable to inside millage are reduced at different rates and at different intervals.

In the example above, the residents of County A will have their school district inside millage inflation capped at one rate but their county and township inside millage capped at a different rate on a different cycle. The confusion could be further compounded if the resident doesn't live in a township but rather lives in a municipality that crosses county lines with a third county.

Ultimately, the exact administration of the inflationary cap on inside millage across county lines is in the hands of county auditors.

*0809: Calculation of homestead exemption*

The bill adjusts the calculation of an individual's homestead exemption by calculating the reduction without consideration of the property tax credit the owner may receive from their school district being on the 20-mill floor.

Under House Bill 186, which took effect earlier this year, if a resident's school district is on the millage floor they receive a credit on their tax bill for the difference between the inflation rate and the calculated taxes from the millage floor. This provision of the omnibus bill ignores the credit when calculating a recipient's homestead exemption, ensuring that receiving one credit does not reduce the benefit of the homestead exemption.

*0535-1: Timing of inside millage reductions and tax reduction factors*

Finally, the bill delays the tax reduction factor calculation for the school district 20-mill floor to ensure the effects of the inflationary cap on inside millage are reflected. The amendment also includes other timing specifications for inflationary cap calculations.

**TIF Exemption Applications (0546-3)**

The bill makes changes to the timeline for exemptions authorized by tax increment financing (TIF) agreements. Applications can now be filed before the tax year in which the exemption would apply, and the Tax Department must make a determination on the application within one year of receiving it (creating a "shot clock").

The Department can request additional information from the applicant. The request adds an additional 120 days to the "shot clock" beginning when the Department receives the requested information.

The bill also allows parcels in any approved TIF application to be split or be expanded via combination with other parcels without requiring a new application, if the original parcel is still included.

Finally, the bill eliminates the requirement that any TIF application includes certification that any existing property taxes due on the property are either paid or subject to payment plans or tax certificates.

### **Regional Transit Authority Contracts (0593)**

The bill aligns prohibited contract terms for regional transit authorities with those created for counties under the CCAO-backed county omnibus bill of the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. These provisions are listed in [County Advisory Bulletin 2025-01, County Omnibus Bill](#), beginning on page 3.

### **Enterprise Zone Delinquent Taxes Abatement (0654)**

The bill, through temporary law, allows certain property owners in enterprise zones to apply for an abatement of delinquent property taxes without regard to existing restrictions on the payment of delinquent taxes.

Provisions like this are common in budget bills and other large-scale bills to address individualized circumstances.

### **Other Minor Provisions**

The bill authorizes various appropriation modifications. These include:

- Reallocating any remaining funds from SFY 2026 for the purposes of conducting a performance audit of the indigent defense system to SFY 2027;
- Removing a SFY 2027 earmark for the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia and creating an earmark in SFY 2027 for Marietta College’s programs to train high-demand professions in the health care field; and
- Appropriating \$3.46 million for dredging three lakes across the state.

### **Child welfare visitation language changed prior to committee vote**

[House Bill 635](#) (Representatives Phil Plummer and Tom Young) was [amended](#) prior to being voted out of the House Children and Human Services Committee on Monday. CCAO testified as an [interested party](#) on the introduced version of the bill discussing resource challenges for PCSAs to carry out the increased weekly visitation mandate for children under age of five, with a developmental disability, or in a congregate care placement. Under current law, visitation is required at least monthly in most cases.

The amendment changed these visitation requirements by requiring, for children under age five, with a developmental disability, in a treatment foster home or medically fragile foster home, or in residential care:

- Face-to-face visit in the first week of placement;

- Face-to-face visits bimonthly, not in the same week; and
- Virtual visits on weeks without a face-to-face visit.

If a caseworker is unable to conduct a virtual visit, the PCSA may arrange for a service provider in the child's case plan to conduct the visit. The caseworker with full responsibility for case planning and case management of a child's case must conduct one of the visits each month. The language allows a PCSA to contract with another agency to conduct the other visits.

The amended bill also codifies Ohio Administrative Code visitation requirements for children on in-home and out-of-home safety plans and requires the involvement of a supervisory team for the following decision points:

- Screening for infants under one year, children between ages one and five with a substantiated report of abuse or neglect, or children or siblings of a child who has experienced a substantiated or indicated near fatality;
- Prior to closing an investigation or assessment, or implementation of a reunification plan for children aged five and under or children with a known disability; and
- A new report of abuse or neglect on a child with an open case.

Chair Andrea White thanked interested parties, including CCAO and PCSAO, for their involvement in the legislative process and acknowledged there would be continued conversations in the Senate on HB 635. Prior to the vote, Representative Tracey Richardson expressed concern that there were no additional resources included in the legislation to help PCSAs meet the new requirements, a concern Chair White acknowledged.

The committee favorably reported the bill, but it was not brought to a floor vote in the House before the chamber finished its work this week.

Members with questions should contact Rachel Reedy at [rreedy@ccao.org](mailto:rreedy@ccao.org).

## **Bubb testifies before data center select committee; data center bill stalls**

The Select Committee on Data Centers continued its hearings on Monday with local government and labor testimony. Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb, who serves as CCAO Technology and Artificial Intelligence Chair, [provided testimony](#) on behalf of CCAO that described the conversations counties have around data centers that touch transparency, energy usage, electrical infrastructure, water consumption, and environmental impact. Commissioner Bubb expressed CCAO's support for the elimination of the sales tax exemption for data centers.

Washington County Commissioner Charlie Schilling also [provided testimony](#) on behalf of Washington County in support of county approval authority over sales tax exemptions and developer financial completion assurance.

On Tuesday, the Senate Energy Committee adopted two substitute bills to [House Bill 646](#) (Representatives Gary Click and Kellie Deeter) that included multiple data center related policy changes.

After undergoing a multiple rounds of amendments into Wednesday, [the reported version](#) of HB 646 includes the following provisions, among others:

- Limits sales and use tax exemption for data centers generally up to 50%. That limit is for future data centers, rather than existing tax exemption agreements.
  - Requires, for eligibility, that data centers with an aggregate monthly maximum demand of 250 megawatts offset their electricity consumption by providing their own power generation through a mercantile customer self-power system, customer-generator project, or co-located load arrangement, or by entering into a purchase power arrangement of at least 15 years.
- Limits local real estate and property tax exemptions for data centers to no more than 50%.
- Clarifies that nondisclosure agreements do not supersede public records laws.
- Requires the Department of Development to post on its website resources for local governments to use when authorizing property tax exemptions for data centers.

The Senate Energy Committee reported the bill with an 8-3 vote along party lines. However, during discussions between the chambers, it was determined that more work was needed on the bill before passage and HB 646 was ultimately re-referred to the Senate Energy Committee.

Speaker of the House Matt Huffman stated his caucus members have differing opinions on the sales tax exemption policy.

CCAO anticipates that the data center policy conversation will continue.

## **Other actions of note**

In addition to the bills and provisions discussed above, other bills or provisions of interest to counties were sent to Governor DeWine.

### **House Bill 251, Law Enforcement Use of UAVs**

[HB 251](#) (Representative Bernard Willis) concerns how law enforcement agencies can utilize unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The bill was passed by the Senate with a vote of 30-2 and concurred upon by the House with a vote of 81-5.

The provision of the bill that may have a fiscal impact on local law enforcement is the prohibition on acquisition of UAVs from any country designated a “foreign adversary” by the Secretary of State beginning 48 months (four years) after the bill takes effect. The use of any UAVs acquired from a designated foreign adversary after that date is prohibited as well.

This provision will only be effective if federal law does not allow the purchase of and operation of UAVs from foreign adversaries. The use of such UAVs is currently prohibited by federal law after their inclusion in the FCC Covered List after President Donald Trump directed them to be included via an Executive Order issued in December 2025.

In other provisions, the bill brings laws governing the use of evidence gathered by UAVs in line with those concerning more traditional evidence gathering. This includes requiring a court-issued search warrant for the collection of surveillance data using UAVs if a law enforcement officer would have otherwise needed a warrant to physically enter a house. It also prohibits evidence gathered by UAVs without a warrant from being used in criminal proceedings.

#### **House Bill 297, Memorial Day Funding**

[HB 297](#) (Representatives Kevin Ritter and Johnathan Newman) increases the amount that veterans organizations can request from the board of county commissioners to defray the costs of Memorial Day expenses from up to \$500 to up to \$1,000. It also increases the amount that a civic organization can request for the same purposes from up to \$100 to up to \$200.

As under current law, the appropriation is mandatory if requested, and any unexpended funds must be returned to the county.

The bill passed the Senate with a vote of 31-0. Since there were no changes made in the Senate, the bill goes to the governor.

#### **HB 433, County Auditor Weights and Measures Authority.**

[House Bill 433](#) (Representative Roy Klopfenstein) began as a bill to make modifications to the inspection and fee schedule for amusement rides.

The bill was amended in the Senate to, among other changes, expand the authority of the county auditor (in their role as the sealer of weights and measures) to verify adverse prices, price representations, and point of sale systems to verify accuracy. This responsibility used to be the exclusive duty of the Director of the Department of Agriculture.

The Senate passed the bill with a vote of 33-0 and the changes were concurred upon by the House with a vote of 80-6.

#### **House Bill 472, Voter ID for Absentee Ballots**

[HB 472](#) (Representative Jodi Salvo) originally concerned the elimination of fees for certain personal documents for individuals experiencing homelessness.

The bill was amended in the Senate to make changes to the law governing absentee voting, specifically by requiring electors to provide photo identification to vote by mail. The bill includes exceptions for uniformed service members, overseas absent voters, religious objectors, and those electors who have certain disabilities, a lack of mobility, are confined in jail (except for those incarcerated for a felony), or who have other material obstacles.

The Legislative Service Commission estimates that the new requirements will likely increase administrative costs on county boards of elections, but that most of the cost will be borne by the Secretary of State to establish secure methods through which electors can apply for absent ballots and provide photographic proof of identification ahead of time.

The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 23-10 and the changes were concurred upon by the House with a vote of 60-34.

#### **Senate Bill 262, Variations from Standard Forms**

[SB 262](#) (Senator Bill Blessing) requires public construction contracts that use an industry standard form to clearly indicate any variations made from the standard form. If the variation is not clearly indicated, that portion of the contract is void and defaults back to the wording in the standard form.

The House passed the bill unanimously last week, and this week the Senate concurred unanimously with the amendments added in the House.

#### **Senate Bill 273, Security for Major Political Party Gubernatorial Candidates**

[SB 273](#) (Senator Kyle Koehler) primarily focuses on lawful owners of firearms to store the firearm with a federally licensed firearms dealer or with a local law enforcement agency.

During the committee process in the House, an amendment was added to require the State Highway Patrol to provide security, at the Governor's direction, for major party gubernatorial candidates, vice-gubernatorial candidates, and their immediate family members.

Of note for counties is that the bill earmarks \$2 million to reimburse local law enforcement for costs incurred in assisting the State Highway Patrol in providing the security.

The bill passed the House with a vote of 95-0 and the Senate concurred with the changes by a vote of 32-0.

#### **House Bill 173, Water Service Submetering**

[HB 173](#) (Representative David Thomas) is a bill that modifies the law governing behind-the-meter utility services, more commonly known as submetered utility services. Submetering is a practice where, in the example of an apartment building, the owner can "submeter" each unit so the unit pays for the actual amount of utility service the unit used, instead of a single charge to the building that is divided out across the units.

The bill originally exempted submetered utilities from certain PUCO regulations, including billing services for the resale of water service.

After concerns from interested parties, the Senate Public Utilities Commission removed the provisions pertaining to water service from the bill. Senator Shane Wilkin, the chair of the committee, indicated that water-related provisions will be revisited later in the legislative term.

The bill was passed by the Senate with a vote of 24-9 and was concurred upon by the House with a vote of 56-35.

### **House Bill 105, Third Party Litigation Funding Disclosure**

[HB 105](#) (Representatives Meredith Craig and Jim Thomas) makes changes to the law regarding third party litigation funding agreements. The bill implements transparency requirements by ensuring disclosure of a funding agreement after conclusion of a case and implements consumer protections that ensure plaintiffs are not being taken advantage of and bans foreign-backed entities from being involved in funding agreements.

Third-party litigation funding allows outside investors with no direct stake in a legal dispute to finance lawsuits in exchange for a portion of any future settlement or judgment. While often used to help plaintiffs access capital, these arrangements operate with limited transparency, can prolong litigation, and often leave plaintiffs with only a fraction of their settlement while funders collect a substantial share of the proceeds.

In some cases, foreign-backed entities have invested in U.S. litigation, raising concerns about outside influence in American courts.

The bill originally passed the House by a vote of 76-14 last November. The Senate passed an amended version this week with a vote of 31-2, and the House concurred on the changes by a vote of 82-12.

## **State capital sent to Governor with no changes**

During the whirlwind sessions on Wednesday, the General Assembly easily passed [Senate Bill 450](#), the state capital budget. SB 450 was passed by the Senate last week with a vote of 31-0 and passed the House this week by a vote of 93-2

One of the largest new items in this term's capital budget is \$346.5 million for mental health facilities, including a new facility in Montgomery County called the Miami Valley Behavioral Healthcare Hospital. While jail projects did not receive dedicated funding, this hospital may ease some cost pressures on county jails if it enables inmates to receive medical treatment there instead of in the jail.

As is tradition for the capital budget, it includes money for a host of [local community projects](#). This term, community projects totaled \$208.3 million. A review identified 59 county projects that received funding, including two small jail projects. These 59 projects total \$13.9 million and are predominantly county fairground projects.

The bill includes an emergency clause, allowing it to take effect immediately upon the Governor's signature.

## Legislative Activity

### Floor Votes

The General Assembly held votes this week on bills that may be of interest to counties.

#### House of Representatives

- [House Bill 284](#) (Representatives Mark Hiner and Erika White): To require iron or steel that is produced in the United States be used on projects supported by state funds.
  - PASSED, 91-0
- [House Bill 314](#) (Representatives Dani Isaacsohn and Sharon Ray): To restrict harassing or disruptive public records requests and permit private contractors to respond to voluminous public records requests.
  - PASSED, 75-17
- [House Bill 346](#) (Representatives Matthew Kishman and Josh Williams): To enact V.J.'s Law to require mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect to report to both a peace officer and the public children services agency.
  - PASSED, 90-0

### Committee Hearings

The following committees held hearings on bills or subjects of note to counties.

#### House Public Safety

- [House Bill 830](#) (Representatives Jeff LaRe and Darnell Brewer): To establish the violent crime reduction grant program.
  - Second hearing, no testimony

#### House Ways and Means

- [House Bill 762](#) (Representatives Beth Lear and David Thomas): To exempt certain vending machine food purchases from sales and use tax.
  - Third hearing, no testimony
  - FAVORABLY REPORTED
- [House Bill 391](#) (Representatives Jack Daniels and Heidi Workman): To require tax rates to be expressed as a percentage of true value on tax bills and ballot language.
  - Fourth hearing, no testimony

#### Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety

- [Senate Bill 416](#) (Senator Tom Patton): Regarding school district board of education members deployed on active duty in the United States Armed Forces or Ohio National Guard
  - Third hearing, no testimony

#### House Local Government

- [House Bill 361](#) (Representatives Brian Lorenz and Tex Fischer): To specify the elements of a comprehensive plan, and to make other changes regarding building inspectors, local regulations, and zoning
  - Sixth hearing, no testimony
  - **AMENDED** to remove zoning related changes and requirements for comprehensive plans.

## Introduction of Bills

The following bill(s) that may be of interest to counties were introduced this week:

- [Senate Bill 454](#) (Senator Bill Reineke): To allow a public water system to use point-of-use and point-of-entry treatment devices in certain circumstances.
- [House Bill 961](#) (Representatives Sean Brennan and Dan Troy): To govern the practice of providing veterans claim assistance for compensation and to name this act the Veterans Empowerment Through Ethical Representation and Navigation Act (V.E.T.E.R.A.N. Benefits Protection Act).