



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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Agency heads provide budget testimony to Senate committees

This week, several programs of interest to counties were discussed in Senate committees as the Senate begins its formal review of [House Bill 33](#), the state's main operating budget.

On Tuesday, the Ohio Public Defender Tim Young testified about OPD's budget in front of the Senate General Government Committee. His testimony and questions from senators focused on two amendments that were included in the House Passed version of HB 33. One of these amendments guarantees 100% reimbursement to counties that contract with OPD for services and the other creates a temporary reimbursement cap at the greater of \$75 per hour or the rate a county had effective on April 1, 2023.

During his testimony, Young indicated that he believed both amendments had flaws: the former because it lacked an appropriate funding increase and the latter because it didn't include an exception for capital cases, where the reimbursement rate is set by a council in the Supreme Court and will be \$140 per hour. With the level of funding in the House Passed version, Young estimated that the overall reimbursement rate would be between 89% and 91%, but with the guarantee of 100% to the contract counties, the reimbursement rate for the other counties would likely decrease to around 85%.

CCAO is preparing to have three amendments drafted for the Senate Substitute Bill that will address these concerns:

- **Increased Funding**
 - This amendment will increase funding for reimbursement by \$41 million over the biennium to bring the total appropriation back in line with an overall 100% reimbursement rate.
- **Revision of the Funding Cap**
 - Remove the reference to a county's April 1, 2023, rate and add language specifying that the \$75 figure is for non-capital cases and adding a \$140 per hour cap for capital cases. This language helps ensure that counties receive equal reimbursement, with counties that choose to pay a higher rate being responsible for the additional cost.
- **Creation of a Pilot State Administered System**

- Change statutory language to require that the state public defender pay 100% of the costs in counties that contract with the state for indigent defense services;
- to clarify that the purpose of the Indigent Defense Support Fund is to provide for reimbursement to counties not contracted with the state;
- and to create a new appropriation line item in the Public Defender Commission's general revenue budget to be used for expenses related to providing indigent defense services in counties that are contracted with the state.

Another policy area that CCAO is preparing to request an amendment for is the Next Generation 9-1-1 system. In consultation with several other interested parties, including the telecom industry, CCAO will seek an amendment to include a number of technical changes such as specifying the user fee is to be charged on the service to connect to 9-1-1, not the device, make certain changes to conform with federal telecommunications definitions, to allow the board of county commissioners to appoint a designee to the County 9-1-1 Program Review Committee, among other changes.

Also providing testimony to Senate committees were Department of Aging Director Ursel McElroy in support of the department's Healthy Aging grants, a \$40 million one-time grant program that will flow through the boards of county commissioners, and Department of Administrative Services Director Kathleen Madden who noted that eliminating the monthly subscription fee on the Multi-Agency Rapid Communications System (MARCS) would help facilitate local governments to join the system.

Village dissolution bill amended to include commissioner on transition board

On Tuesday, the House State & Local Government Committee adopted a substitute bill for [House Bill 101](#) (Representative Adam Bird and Representative Jean Schmidt). The bill arises out of an issue in Clermont County where the village of Amelia voted to dissolve in November 2019 but, due to unclear language in the Revised Code, the process stretched multiple years, with some issues still lingering.

One provision of the bill to help ease the process is the creation of a Transition Supervisory Board (TSB), a public body that is comprised of the county auditor, recorder, and (in the As Introduced version) the prosecutor. The TSB will supervise the dissolution of villages including resolving debts and liabilities, approving what operations must continue for the residents, resolving legal claims, and more.

Due to concern over potential conflicts, the substitute bill adopted this week removed the county prosecutor from the TSB and instead specifies that the third member is a county commissioner (as selected by the board of county commissioners).

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

The Senate has begun budget hearings regarding HB 33, the main operating budget. Additionally, the following committees held hearings that included bills that may be of interest to counties:

House Families & Aging

- [House Bill 7](#) (Representative Andrea White and Representative Latyna Humphrey): Enact the Strong Foundations Act

- Second hearing; proponent testimony from Groundwork Ohio, the Catholic Conference of Ohio, the Children's Defense Fund – Ohio, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, and nine other organizations.

Senate Insurance

- [Senate Bill 116](#) (Senator George Lang and Senator Mark Romanchuk): To make changes to Ohio's Unemployment Compensation Law.
 - First hearing; sponsor testimony

Senate Community Revitalization

- [Senate Bill 105](#) (Senator Terry Johnson and Vernon Sykes): Regards the composition of boards of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services; the authority of the boards; and the requirements for operation of recovery housing residences
 - First hearing; sponsor testimony

House Ways & Means

- [Senate Bill 43](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner): Modify homestead exemption for the surviving spouse of a disabled veteran
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House State & Local Government

- [House Bill 85](#) (Representative Tom Patton): Expand methods by which land banks acquire delinquent property
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Upcoming Committee Hearings

The following committees are currently scheduled to meet and discuss bills that may be of interest to counties. Other committees will likely meet as well but as of press time for *Statehouse Report* they have not released agendas. Please note that these schedules are subject to change.

If you would like to offer testimony on any bill, please visit the committee page and contact the committee chair's office for instructions on how to submit testimony.

Tuesday, May 9

[House Families and Aging](#) (11:00 a.m.)

- [House Bill 7](#) (Representative Andrea White and Representative Latyna Humphrey): Enact the Strong Foundations Act
 - Third hearing, all testimony

[House Government Oversight](#) (1:00 p.m.)

- [House Bill 64](#) (Representative Darrell Kick and Representative Rodney Creech): Modify eminent domain law
 - Third hearing
 - Possible Substitute Bill

[House Pensions](#) (1:00 p.m.)

- [House Concurrent Resolution 6](#) (Representative Angela King and Representative Phil Plummer): Urge Congress to repeal Windfall Elimination.
 - Second hearing, proponent

House Ways and Means (2:30 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 43](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner): Modify homestead exemption for the surviving spouse of a disabled veteran
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony

House State and Local Government (3:30 p.m.)

- [House Bill 145](#) (Representative Thomas Hall and Representative Brian Lampton): Modify the law regarding village dissolution
 - Third hearing, opponent testimony
 - Possible amendments
- [House Bill 85](#) (Representative Tom Patton): Expand methods by which land banks acquire delinquent property
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony