



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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ADVOCACY OUTREACH NEEDED: Senate Budget Amendments

Senate leadership will be reviewing amendments to the budget this weekend, ahead of the release of the Senate Substitute Bill. It is very important that you reach out to your legislators to encourage their support for the three amendments listed below to show strong support for these county priorities.

Indigent Defense:

- [Amendment SC0510-1](#)
- **Fiscal:** Increase the appropriation for reimbursement to counties by \$41.0 million over the biennium (\$23.1 million in FY 2024 and \$18.0 million in FY 2025).
- **Summary:** This will bring the bill to an estimated 100% reimbursement rate, rather than the 90% reimbursement rate that the Ohio Public Defender estimates the current level of funding will provide.

LGF Increase:

- [Amendment SC0399](#)
- **Fiscal:** Increase the percentage of state general revenue fund tax revenue that is distributed through the Local Government Fund from 1.70% to 2.50%. This will bring an additional \$488.0 million over the biennium (\$238.0 million in FY 2024 and \$250.0 million in FY 2025) to counties, townships, and municipalities.
- **Summary:** This flexible funding will help local governments provide services and programs their communities need.

County Credit Cards:

- [Amendment SC1728](#)
- **Fiscal:** No direct fiscal impact
- **Summary:** Will broaden the authority for counties to use credit cards for work-related expenses that serve a public purpose. The board of county commissioners must work with the county auditor to develop a policy for using the county credit card. This authority will improve government efficiency by modernizing how purchases are made while preserving existing oversight.

Election Funding:

Additionally, please stress to your senators the importance of state funding for a potential August special election. Counties bear the cost of conducting elections and should be reimbursed for those costs when an election is held solely for a statewide ballot vote.

Senators will be reviewing amendments this weekend ahead of the Senate's Substitute Bill, so time is of the essence. It is vital that you communicate these priorities to your senators, particularly if they are on the Senate Finance Committee, so we can show that counties are supportive of these changes.

In addition to the amendments above, please review the [CCAO Senate Budget Priority](#) document for other provisions that the Association is watching closely as the Senate conducts its review of the budget.

Commissioners testify in support of SB 105 regarding local ADAMH boards

[Senate Bill 105](#) (Senator Terry Johnson and Senator Vernon Sykes) makes several changes to the law governing local mental health, addiction, and recovery boards. The bill received a second hearing in the Senate Community Revitalization Committee on Wednesday.

The bill allows the boards of county commissioners in a district to change the size of their local mental health, addiction, and recovery board to 18, 15, 14, 12, or 9 members. If a board of county commissioners wishes to keep its board at its current size of 18 or 14, it may do so without any notification. Boards of county commissioners would appoint two-thirds of the local board members, with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) appointing the other one-third. The bill outlines a formal process for a county to withdrawal from a joint-county district.

SB 105 also requires OMHAS to notify local boards when a new provider seeks certification, when a provider is being re-certified, and if a provider is under investigation. The local board then has the opportunity to provide any information that would be beneficial to the department when making a determination on certification or investigation.

Scioto County Commissioner Bryan Davis [testified](#) before the committee and highlighted his support for increased local control and oversight. Commissioner Davis described the situation in Scioto County over the last several years, where more and more providers have opened operations in the county, but overdose and fatalities have also continued to rise. Commissioner Davis testified:

More local control of Board composition is vital. After all, who knows the needs of the community better than those who live in it? At the local level we look into the eyes and hearts of those we serve every day. By doing so you learn things that otherwise can't be learned, and you use better judgement because you have the facts, at times, literally right around the corner.

You can [watch his testimony here](#), beginning at the 00:01:45 mark.

Lucas County Commissioner Pete Gerken also testified on Wednesday. Commissioner Gerken shared his personal experience with recovery and the importance of certified providers, notification to local ADAMH boards regarding provider certification, and data sharing. He also spoke to a provision of

Senate Bill 105 regarding contracts between providers and ADAMH boards and shared his experience in Lucas County. [His full testimony](#) begins at the 01:11:00 mark.

Ashtabula County Commissioner Kathryn Whittington submitted [written testimony](#) to the committee. CCAO also submitted [written proponent testimony](#) on Senate Bill 105. If you have questions about the bill, please contact Rachel Massoud Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org or 614-220-7996.

Senate passes SB 71, election data bill

On Wednesday, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 71](#) (Senator Theresa Gavarone) by a vote of 24-7. The bill, named the Data Analysis Transparency Archive Act, makes changes to the ways that county boards of elections must retain election data, enter information into the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD), and how boards make information available to the public.

The bill standardizes the manner of data entry to increase comparability of data across counties. It also requires boards to include information about an elector's voter registration date, voting history, last activity date, and other information that the Secretary of State may require under rule.

The bill also requires boards of elections to create a daily record of its registration database as of 4:00 p.m. each day between the 46th day after an election and the 81st day after the election. These records must be submitted to the Secretary of State in a manner determined by rule.

The last main provision that will affect county boards of elections is changes to how the boards must make registration records available to the public. The bill specifies that voter registration forms and the SWVRD are public records subject to the same disclosure procedures as other public records. Released registration forms must protect the elector's Social Security number, driver's license or state ID number, telephone number, and email address, as well as any other information prohibited from disclosure under state or federal law.

It also prohibits the release of the voter registration record of a participant of the Safe at Home program, and the home address of designated public service workers, such as a peace officer, prosecutor, correctional employee, or firefighter. Designated public service workers must submit a redaction request to the board of elections to receive this disclosure exemption.

Analysis by the Legislative Service Commission estimates that complying with the new requirements in the bill will cost boards of elections \$2.5 million. The bill does not include an appropriation but does include intent language that the General Assembly intends to appropriate funds to pay these costs. It is not unusual for bills that move through the legislative process at the same time as the main operating budget to include intent language rather than an appropriation. CCAO will work with the General Assembly to ensure that funding is provided, either through the budget or, if the bill has not passed the House of Representatives by the time the budget passes, in the bill itself.

Roundup: CCAO on Capital Square

In addition to testimony on Senate Bill 105, noted above, CCAO was active at other committee hearings as well. Senior Policy Analyst Jon Honeck provided proponent testimony for [House Bill 145](#) (Representative Thomas Hall and Representative Brian Lampton) and Research Analyst Nick Ciolli provided proponent testimony for [House Bill 101](#) (Representative Adam Bird and Representative Jean Schmidt). Additionally, a concurrent resolution supported by the Association received an amendment urged by CCAO and was favorably reported.

On Tuesday, Senior Policy Analyst Jon Honeck submitted [written proponent testimony](#) to the House State and Local Government Committee for HB 145, which expand political subdivision joint purchasing authority to expressly include purchases for construction services. The bill is largely similar to Senate Bill 23 (Senator George Lang), which CCAO also provided proponent testimony, and which was favorably reported out of Senate Government Oversight last month. In his testimony, Honeck noted that a key benefit of the bill is that it would allow counties to partner with townships and villages on construction contracts. “In these situations,” he explained, “the county procurement process may be able to leverage lower costs and receive a greater number of bids than a smaller local government would receive on its own.”

Also on Tuesday, the same committee heard testimony regarding HB 101, which modifies the procedures for when a village dissolves. Research Analyst Nick Ciolli provided [written proponent testimony](#) to the committee, noting that the creation of the Transitional Advisory Board is good policy by giving oversight of the village dissolution to countywide elected officials (the county recorder, the county auditor, and a member of the board of county commissioners). These officials are well-positioned to make determinations regarding the division of assets and liabilities between townships that may be affected by a village dissolving. Clermont County Commissioner Bonnie Batchler also [provided testimony](#), in which she informed the committee about her experience as a Pierce Township Trustee when the village of Amelia dissolved.

Finally, the House Pensions Committee favorably reported [House Concurrent Resolution 6](#) (Representative Angela King and Representative Phil Plummer) with an amendment. HCR 6 urges Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) in Social Security and, thanks to an amendment supported by CCAO, it also urges Congress to repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO). The WEP is a modified benefit formula that reduces the Social Security benefit amount for some retired or disabled workers that have earned pensions from earnings not covered by Social Security while the GPO reduces the Social Security benefits of spouses, widows, and widowers with a pension from a federal, state, or local government job.

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

The Senate has been conducting budget hearings regarding HB 33, the main operating budget, in Senate Finance. The following committees also held hearings that included bills which may be of interest to counties:

Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources

- [Senate Bill 111](#) (Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson): Relating to temporary greenhouses and building codes, to establish the Urban Farmer Youth Initiative Pilot Program, to codify certain property tax requirements for agricultural land, and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing; sponsor testimony
- [Senate Bill 119](#) (Senator Bill Reineke): To make changes to the laws governing the transfer and disposal of solid waste and construction and demolition debris, including increasing certain fees.
 - First hearing; sponsor testimony

House Civil Justice

- [House Bill 64](#) (Representative Darrell Kick and Representative Rodney Creech): To modify the law regarding eminent domain.
 - Third hearing; no testimony

- Adopted a substitute bill

House Ways & Means

- [Senate Bill 43](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner): Modify homestead exemption for the surviving spouse of a disabled veteran.
 - Third hearing, no testimony

Senate Judiciary

- [Senate Bill 122](#) (Senator Nate Manning and Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson): To make changes regarding bail and to declare an emergency.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony and proponent testimony from the Ohio Judicial Conference, the State Bar Association, the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association, the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Adams Project, and the Ohio Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

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 23

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

- [House Bill 64](#) (Representative Darrell Kick and Representative Rodney Creech): Modify eminent domain law.
 - Fourth hearing, opponent testimony

[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.
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony
 - POSSIBLE VOTE
- [House Bill 118](#) (Representative Nick Santucci and Representative Melanie Miller): Exempt certain baby products from the sales and use tax.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony

Wednesday, May 24

[House Higher Education](#) (10:30 a.m.)

- [House Bill 164](#) (Representative Dontavius Jarrells and Representative Bill Seitz): To establish the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program, to require the Department of Education to hire a full-time school foster care liaison, and to make an appropriation for the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony