STATEHOUSE REPORT

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CCAO releases analysis of CCAO-BSSA Jail Project Survey

CCAO is happy to share the analysis of a survey conducted in conjunction with the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association concerning county jail projects.

The survey, conducted from December 2023 through January 2024, is an update on a similar survey conducted in 2019. The original survey found a statewide need of $1.4 billion for jail construction, renovation, expansion, and repair. The new survey has found that figure increased to $2.2 billion.

In addition to the significant increase during the gap between the two surveys, the new survey found that individual project costs were coming in 41.5% higher than the initial quote, on average.

County jails are facing pressures due to the rising need for drug addiction and mental health service provision to keep inmates healthy and an increasing population of female inmates. Those two factors, along with the need to enhance safety for corrections staff, are the primary drivers of jail projects.

The survey's findings support CCAO's request for $250 million through the capital budget for jail construction and renovation. This funding is currently contained in House Bill 2, recently passed by the House. CCAO encourages our members to engage with your senators concerning jail needs in your county and the findings in the CCAO-BSSA survey.

If you have questions concerning the survey, please contact CCAO Research Analyst Nick Ciolli at nciolli@ccao.org.

Advocacy Corner: History of jail funding in Ohio

We are pleased to see a renewed sense of partnership from the state in the area of county jail construction and renovation. The proposed $250 million dollars for jail construction contained in House Bill 2 represents the largest single appropriation for county jail construction from the state. This investment could not have come at a better time following the results from our updated CCAO-BSSA jail survey. While we are heading in the right direction in this critical area of partnership, it is important to understand how we got here.

The state began appropriating capital budget dollars for county jail construction in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 1985. On average, the state appropriated $15.8 million a year for county jail construction during the 18-year period ranging from SFY 1985 to SFY 2002. The total appropriation during this period totaled $285 million dollars. The funding from the state allowed counties to construct and open 49 new full-service jails, three new multi-service jails, and to renovate 10 existing facilities according to data from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC). Between when the funding ceased in SFY 2003 and when the DeWine-Husted Administrative revived the program in SFY 2019, only nine new jails were built and only six major jail renovations were made.

As you can see, the number of new jails built and facilities renovated slowed considerably without the support from the state. The average lifespan of a jail is between twenty and thirty years, so many of the jails that were built using state capital funds during the initial era of the state partnership will soon need to be rebuilt and updated. We are extremely grateful for the DeWine-Husted administration and the last several general assemblies for restoring this key area of the state-county partnership. However, more work needs to be done in this area and continued state support is vital as history has shown. We would urge our members to contact the Ohio Senate and express support for the $250 million dollars allocated in HB 2 for county jail construction and renovation projects.

Age is not the only reason why many counties have faced a heightened need to build new facilities or conduct major renovations to existing structures. The nature of the population served in jails has changed considerably since 1985-2002, putting pressures on county facilities that policymakers in 2002 likely could not have foreseen. That topic will be covered in greater detail in next week's Statehouse Report.

H2Ohio webinar materials available online

This week, CCAO hosted a webinar regarding the H2Ohio Program, which received unprecedented funding levels in the most recent state operating budget. This funding will be distributed among four entities with the goal of reducing harmful algal blooms within the Western Lake Erie Basin and other water quality projects across the state through the new Rivers Initiative. Funding flows through the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Lake Erie Commission.

CCAO would like to thank our speakers for sharing their time to talk with county officials from across the state about H2Ohio. Thank you to Director of Agriculture Brian Baldridge, OEPA Director Anne Vogel, Lake Erie Commission Executive Director Joy Mulinex, and H2Ohio Wetlands Program Manager Eric Saas.

A recording of the webinar, along with copies of slides, has been posted on CCAO's webinar archive.

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

Several bills of interest to counties received hearings this week across different committees.

Senate General Government

- Senate Bill 137 (Senator Theresa Gavarone and Senator Bill DeMora): To generally prohibit the use of ranked choice voting and to withhold Local Government Fund distributions from a municipality or chartered county that uses ranked choice voting.
    - Third hearing, proponent testimony from Secretary of State Frank LaRose and one private individual and opponent testimony from the Ohio Mayors Alliance, the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund, the R Street Institute, Rank the Vote Ohio, and several private individuals.

Introduction of Bills

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

- House Bill 424 (Representative Beth Lear): To modify the sales and use taxation of delivery network services.
- Senate Bill 224 (Senator Tim Schaffer): To modify the sales and use taxation of delivery network services.
- Senate Bill 226 (Senator Terry Johnson): To extend the law that prohibits certain governments, businesses, and individuals from acquiring agricultural land to certain other property and to name this act the Ohio Property Protection Act.

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.

Wednesday, February 28

Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform (10:30 a.m.)

- Invited testimony from:
    - Zaino Hall & Farrin LLC
    - The National Conference of State Legislatures
    - The Council on State Taxation

Senate General Government (10:30 a.m.)

- House Bill 257 (Representative Jim Hoops and Representative Thaddeus Claggett): To authorize certain public bodies to meet virtually.
  - First hearing, sponsor testimony.
- House Bill 238 (Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur and Representative Roy Klopfenstein): To revise and streamline the state's occupational regulations and to make an appropriation.
  - First hearing, sponsor testimony.
- House Concurrent Resolution 6 (Representative Angela King and Representative Phil Plummer): To urge Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.
  - Second hearing, proponent testimony.

Indigent Defense Task Force (Time TBA)

- Invited testimony from the Sixth Amendment Center.