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# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

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Legislative Budget  
Office

H.B. 217  
(1\_136\_0545-4)  
136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

## Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 217's Bill Analysis](#)

**Version:** In House Public Safety

**Primary Sponsors:** Reps. Cockley and Ritter

**Local Impact Statement Procedure Required:** Yes

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### Highlights

- Law enforcement agencies will experience an increase in workload and administrative costs to manually enter and later remove information from reports of missing children and adults into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). Without automation through the Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), these increases may be significant for some agencies, particularly large metropolitan police divisions with a large volume of missing persons reports. It is unclear how many agencies can absorb the work utilizing existing staff and resources.
- The initial cost for the Attorney General's Office to establish an electronic database for reports of missing persons and children is expected to range between \$15,000 and \$20,000, with ongoing annual maintenance costs of \$10,000 to \$15,000. Law enforcement may incur costs related to the digitalization of records to submit to the database.
- The bill may also result in minimal one-time costs for the Attorney General to update and publish a best practices protocol and for law enforcement agencies to update policies and procedures related to missing persons cases and records.

### Detailed Analysis

#### NamUs

The bill expands current requirements for law enforcement concerning reports of missing children and adults. It requires law enforcement agencies to enter information from a missing child report into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) immediately following the receipt of a missing child report or receipt of additional information during the

investigation. Similarly, information from a missing person report for an adult must be made available through NamUs if they are not located within 30 days. The bill also requires law enforcement to update NamUs when a missing child or adult has been found. NamUs is a national centralized repository and resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases across the United States.

The bill's new requirements appear to partly mirror those under federal law. Under federal law, a law enforcement agency that submits a missing child report to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) also must submit the missing child report to NamUs. Federal law requires the U.S. Department of Justice, which administers NamUs, to facilitate data sharing between NCIC and the NamUs databases with respect to missing and unidentified persons. To date, this data sharing linkage has not been implemented. Ohio law does require information contained in an initial report to be submitted to NCIC immediately for children and adults under 21, and within either seven or 30 days for adults 21 and older. Reporting to NamUs would be an additional duty under the bill. Presumably, once the data linkage between the two systems is completed, some of the administrative burdens will be lessened.

### **Fiscal effects**

The bill will increase administrative work related to missing persons cases for law enforcement agencies to enter, update, and remove information from the NamUs database. According to subject matter experts, without an automated transfer of information, the bill will require law enforcement to manually duplicate data entry from NCIC into NamUs. For those agencies that are not already entering information into NamUs, this new process will reportedly require additional personnel time, potentially affecting the allocation of resources. It is unclear how many agencies can absorb the work utilizing existing staff and resources.

The precise impact will vary by factors such as jurisdiction size, staffing levels, and the volume of cases handled, however, it may be significant for some agencies. For large metropolitan police divisions that receive a large volume of missing person reports in particular, the manual process could notably increase administrative workload for their staff. For example, the Columbus Division of Police typically receives over 300 missing persons reports each month.

While the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) can assist agencies with this work, upon request, the Ohio Attorney General's Office (AGO) notes that NamUs still requires local agencies to provide written permission to publish each entry, which adds to ongoing administrative tasks and procedural complexities.

### **Search warrants – high-risk missing child and missing person**

Under current law, for law enforcement to access personal records, they must obtain a search warrant. However, in most cases, judges cannot issue a warrant unless there is probable cause that a crime has been committed. Therefore, in cases with no immediate evidence of a criminal act or foul play, law enforcement has no avenue to obtain certain records to assist in locating the missing person.

The bill addresses this issue by providing a rebuttable presumption that individuals meeting its criteria of a high-risk missing child or person are missing as a result of, or in association with, criminal activity. This presumption would, in effect, authorize a search warrant to be issued. If the investigating agency has reason to believe the missing individual is high risk, as defined by the bill, the agency would be required to contact the appropriate county prosecutor to make a

determination of the high-risk designation (see the [Substitute Bill Comparative Synopsis](#) for the criteria).

For law enforcement agencies that experience challenges in obtaining search warrants in these circumstances, these provisions will increase efficiency and add to existing investigation methods. For prosecutors, making high-risk determinations is not expected to significantly add to their existing workload. Under current practice, prosecutors often are already consulted by law enforcement before seeking a search warrant, which involves reviewing evidence to advise whether probable cause exists. Presumably, high-risk determinations would be absorbed into this existing work.

## Release of records

Subject to Ohio's Public Records Law, the bill allows courts of common pleas to release any records pertaining to a high-risk missing child that are obtained by an investigating law enforcement agency to a governmental entity upon showing of good cause by the governmental entity. Courts will experience increased administrative costs to respond to additional records requests. The annual cost of the associated work for any given court to comply is not readily quantifiable, but will vary based on the number and type of records impacted.

## BCI electronic database

The bill requires BCI to establish and maintain an electronic database for reports of missing persons and children. However, the bill is operationally unclear if all reports are to be submitted to the AGO's database or only those marked for destruction by a local law enforcement agency. The AGO expects initial costs for this new database to range between \$15,000 and \$20,000, with ongoing annual maintenance costs of \$10,000 to \$15,000 assuming moderate system complexity and the ability to leverage existing platforms or infrastructure. The initial costs would cover development, integration with systems like NamUs, and basic infrastructure setup. There would also be ongoing annual costs to support system hosting, user support and training, maintenance, and compliance updates.

## Electronic records retention

The bill requires law enforcement agencies to retain all reports of missing children and missing persons in an electronic format prior to destruction of any paper reports and, upon conversion, to promptly submit those reports to the BCI database described above under "**BCI electronic database**." According to the [Ohio Missing Persons Working Group Report \(PDF\)](#),<sup>1</sup> the process of digitizing could be burdensome for some local law enforcement agencies. Costs would only be incurred however, once the agency marks the record for destruction, if the bill's intention is interpreted this way and subsequent guidance is provided by the AGO. Presumably, agencies would be permitted to continue current recordkeeping protocols until such time.

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<sup>1</sup> See the [Ohio Missing Persons Working Group Report \(PDF\)](#), which is available under "June 2025" Agency Reports Submitted to the General Assembly on LSC's website: [lsc.ohio.gov/publications/monthly-agency-reports](https://lsc.ohio.gov/publications/monthly-agency-reports).

## Attorney General's best practices protocol

Under current law, the Attorney General is required to publish and distribute to all law enforcement agencies a best practices protocol for addressing reports of missing persons in the state. The bill further states that this protocol must include practices for making assessments of whether a missing person is a high-risk missing person. Upon receipt of the best practices protocol, each law enforcement agency in the state is required to develop and adopt a written policy establishing a procedure for retaining all reports of missing persons in an electronic format prior to the destruction of any paper reports and, upon conversion, for promptly submitting those electronic reports to the BCI database described above under “**BCI electronic database.**” The bill also requires the best practices protocol to include the bill's NamUs requirements. As a result, law enforcement agencies may incur minimal one-time costs to update policies and procedures related to missing persons cases and records.

## Synopsis of Fiscal Effect Changes

As compared to the As Introduced version of the bill, the substitute bill (I\_136\_0545-4) makes the following notable changes:

- The substitute bill modifies the timing for missing child entry into NamUs by requiring law enforcement to integrate information about a missing child into NamUs immediately following the receipt of a report of a missing child by the agency or the receipt of additional records during the investigation, instead of when a missing child has not been located within 30 days after the date the missing child report is filed with the law enforcement agency as under the As Introduced bill. This change is to align with the federal law NamUs entry requirements for missing children. The bill's 30-day entry requirement for missing persons is unchanged. The related fiscal effect of this change is minimal.
- The substitute bill defines criteria for high-risk children and persons, sets forth requirements for law enforcement and prosecutors for the determination or the high-risk designation, and creates a rebuttable presumption that the individual designated as high risk is missing as a result of, or in association with, criminal activity. This presumption will assist law enforcement agencies in obtaining criminal search warrants and access to certain records. Prosecutors are often consulted to help prepare search warrants, therefore, making high-risk determinations is not expected to add significantly to existing workloads.
- The substitute bill requires law enforcement agencies to retain electronic reports of missing persons and children prior to the destruction of paper reports and submit electronic reports to BCI. Additionally, it specifies that the Attorney General's best practices protocol must include processes for making high-risk assessments and requires law enforcement agencies to adopt policies for electronic record retention and submission. These requirements may pose an administrative burden on law enforcement depending on current records retention schedules and the extent to which the agency digitizes paper records.
- The substitute bill requires BCI to maintain an electronic database for reports of missing persons and children. The AGO expects initial costs to range between \$15,000 and \$20,000, with ongoing annual maintenance costs of \$10,000 to \$15,000 assuming moderate system complexity and the ability to leverage existing platforms or infrastructure.