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Testimony on
**L.D. 739, "An Act to Reimburse the City of Ellsworth for an Access Road to a
New Court Facility in Hancock County"**

Presented by
Representative Russell P. White
District 13

Judiciary Committee
Monday, March 10, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

I am State Representative Russell P. White, and I proudly represent District 13, Central Hancock, Ellsworth, and Waltham. It is an honor to appear before you today for the purpose of introducing L.D. 739, "*An Act to Reimburse the City of Ellsworth for an Access Road to a New Court Facility in Hancock County.*"

Last year, Senator Grohoski was able to secure funding for a new courthouse facility for Hancock County -- a much-needed investment. The existing courthouse was built in 1931, and although it is truly a beautiful work of architecture, it now boasts numerous safety, space, electrical, parking, and mechanical deficiencies that negatively impacts court operations and public service. So, its replacement is a good thing; however, it also began a debate over where the courthouse should be located.

Land was purchased on the Surry Road, in a primarily residential area, and that sparked a resistance from the nearby residents. There were several public hearings, including many meetings with local and State personnel about relocating the courthouse to a more amenable location.

Over, please

Now, to my knowledge, it has been announced that the preferred location, for the city anyway, is off High Street, in Ellsworth – a business area, more accessible, with better traffic flow, etc.. The location is “off” High Street and would require an access road. Estimates have put the road at \$1.2 to \$1.4 million.

There are a couple of reasons why we are asking for assistance.

First, the original location for the new courthouse that the State chose was in a residential area with massive resistance from the locals, and the lot was purchased prior to the knowledge of the neighborhood, thus sparking protest from the neighborhood and a high number of Ellsworth citizens. As such, a land swap had to be accommodated to make this a possibility, and the City of Ellsworth will be absorbing a high cost to make that happen. I humbly ask the State for 50% of the cost of the needed access road, up to an amount of \$750,000.

The second reason is the overall cost of the land swap and access road would adversely affect the citizens of Ellsworth that already have a fairly high tax burden.

It is my understanding that this panel may potentially redirect this bill to the Transportation Committee. I totally understand that vein of thinking and ask if this becomes a reality, that you would please do so with a recommendation of approval.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.