



**Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections  
(OJACC)**

**Testimony before the Finance Corrections  
Subcommittee of the Ohio Senate**

**House Bill 64**

**FY 2016-2017 Budget Review**

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Presented by:

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**To:** Senate Finance Corrections Sub Committee  
**From:** Anne Connell-Freund , President – OJACC  
**Date:** May 21, 2015  
**Subject:** Testimony of the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections

## **Introduction**

Chairman Uecker, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Senate Finance Corrections Sub Committee. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak before the committee today to discuss the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC)'s, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMAS), and Department of Youth Services (DYS) Fiscal Year 2016-17 Budget requests. I am testifying in support of the Budget request submitted by these Departments, specifically the dollars that have been requested for community corrections. I am here both as the President of the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC), and as a practitioner in the field of community corrections for the past 29 years. I will explain how adequately funding community corrections can lead to a reduction in recidivism, a cost savings for the state, and increased public safety in our local communities while treating and supervising Ohio's adult offenders.

## **What is OJACC?**

OJACC is a nonprofit coalition of local elected officials and correctional providers working together to develop, improve, expand, and promote adult and juvenile community corrections. We are an umbrella organization bringing together judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, pretrial/probation officers, law enforcement, corrections officials, community corrections and treatment professionals to work toward the common goals of community interventions for offenders.

## **Treatment and Research**

Treatment is an essential component to effective supervision and recidivism reduction of offenders. It allows for positive, long term, behavioral change, thereby decreasing recidivism and improving public safety. Numerous studies identified the key components of programs successful in reducing recidivism, which has given providers a blueprint to improve the effectiveness of their programs. Although this research was a proactive approach to enhancing the effectiveness of our programs, research is worth little if the recommendations cannot be funded. Adequate funding for treatment is imperative. But we cannot achieve these goals alone, without the vision of Directors Mohr and Plouck, we need to maintain the funding requested for community treatment services and community corrections services.

With regard to the DYS budget, OJACC is concerned with the over \$32 million decrease in general revenue funds in the Department's budget. We understand these cuts are being made without reductions in programming and DYS's population is decreasing. However, youth who are at risk of involvement or who get involved with the court system have some of the highest needs of youth in the state.

## **Challenges**

In many, if not most, of our communities we are facing a real challenge of an ever increasing opiate addiction which crosses ethnic, social and economic levels like we have never seen before. Addiction to opioids often leads to criminal behaviors and into the criminal justice systems. This usually leads to a requirement of some type of residential criminal justice setting. In order to deal with this epidemic at our local criminal justice systems, we need local options to offer our judges and probation officers to assist our communities. Directors Mohr and Plouck have recommended funding which allows for both the addiction community and the criminal justice community to work together for collaboration locally and at a reduced cost of an expensive jail bed or prison bed.

## **Future Directions**

The Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections is convinced that an increased investment in community corrections contains costs, saves future tax dollars, improves public safety, and saves untold human potential. Due to the leadership of our state, Ohio has one of the most highly regarded community correctional systems in the

country. Without such leadership one can only imagine how many more prisons and inmates we would have in our state today.

We also, at the very least, request the consideration that a portion of DYS budget saving to be reinvested in Ohio's most at-risk youth by expanding DYS's current research-based programming or investing in other agencies, such as the Department of Education or Mental Health and Addiction Services, to help intervene before youth get involved in the juvenile justice system altogether.

The cost of providing adult correctional services in Ohio has increased dramatically in the past twenty years. Local community corrections services funded by the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services are critical to ensuring public safety in Ohio. During the next biennium, it is essential that the General Assembly examine ways to increase funding for expansion of existing services without causing harm to the already over-populated prison system. We will continue to provide the best quality services possible, but we require adequate funding levels to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'll be happy to address any questions you may have.

#### References:

ODRC / OJACC Fact Sheet November 2014 (see attached)

Ohio Juvenile Justice Budget Analysis: F16-17 (see attached)