

Testimony on HB 81  
By Major Kirk E. Keller  
Greene County Jail Administrator  
and member of the Ohio Jail Advisory Board  
On behalf of correctional officers and detention facility personnel  
October 29, 2019

Chair Brinkman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Boggs, and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 81.

My name is Kirk Keller and I am the Jail Administrator for Sheriff Gene Fischer in Greene County. I also serve on the State Jail Advisory Board. Over half of my twenty-eight years of service with the Greene County Sheriff's Office has been working in the Corrections Division as a corrections officer, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, and currently the major overseeing the personnel and operations of the division.

I appreciate the opportunity to share how the current language of Ohio Revised Code 4123.026 impacts the corrections officers and detention personnel tasked with managing inmate populations.

As you are aware, the current language covers peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers when post-exposure medical diagnoses are required after an incident has taken place. However, because corrections officers and detention personnel are not covered, they suffer not only from the experience of being spat upon, or having excrement thrown on them, but they suffer additionally from having the costs of their diagnostic testing denied after an incident of exposure to potential disease.

We have had incidents this year in which a police officer and a correctional officer were dealing with an inmate who spat in their faces. Both officers received the post-exposure diagnostic testing according to medical protocol. The police officer's claim was approved by the BWC, but the corrections officer's claim was denied.

The first responders, including the police officers, fire fighters and emergency medical personnel face potential harms from exposure as they deal momentarily with an incident in the line of duty, But, the corrections officers and detention personnel manage inmate populations twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. The potential for exposure for these public servants is greatly increased because of their daily contact with the populations for which they provide care. And yet, when a corrections officer comes in contact with an inmate's blood, urine, feces, or spit, they are denied the same level of care given to the first responders because they personally have had to pay for their diagnostic tests.

On behalf of the brave corrections officers and detention personnel who have to incur the costs for these diagnostic tests, I would ask that you please consider House Bill 81 and provide equal support for their protection as they perform a difficult job.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share with you today. If you have any questions for me, I will do my best to answer them for you.