



May 7, 2021

Senator Matt Dolan  
cc Members of the Senate Finance Committee

On behalf of the Justice Action Network, the largest bipartisan organization advocating for smart and evidence-based criminal justice reforms at the state and federal levels, we urge you to retain the language the House put in the Ohio state budget that would mandate the use of the successful Targeted Community Alternatives to Prison (T-CAP) program statewide.

T-CAP provides the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) funding to counties that opt-in to the program by agreeing to send those convicted of a non-violent, fifth-degree felony offense to treatment in the community rather than send them to prison.

T-CAP offers substance use monitoring and treatment, community-based corrections, supervision services, GED programs, and more that allow an individual to not only stay connected with his or her family, employment, and housing, but take meaningful steps toward recovery so they can begin to get their lives on track. With Ohio having one of the highest overdose death rates in the country, the state desperately needs more treatment services for those suffering from addiction, not prison.

So far, T-CAP has been quite successful. According to the DRC, roughly 4,100 committed to prison were convicted of a fifth-degree felony and sentenced to serve one year or less in 2016. In 2020, only 2,373 individuals committed to prison were convicted of a fifth-degree felony, representing a more than 40% decrease in this low-level population.

With fewer individuals convicted of the lowest-level offenses and sentenced to the shortest prison terms behind bars, Ohio has been able to safely reduce its overcrowded prison system and bring about cost savings as well. While there is significantly more work to be done, T-CAP has helped to contribute to a decline in the state's prison population from its peak in 2015 of 52,240 incarcerated, to 44,027 incarcerated in 2020.

With the DRC accounting for the third largest portion of Ohio's budget, redirecting funds away from incarceration and back into communities that can monitor individuals convicted of low-level offenses in a more cost-effective manner.

Currently, 60 of Ohio's 88 counties now participate in the T-CAP program, which is a testament to its success thus far. It's now time to have the remaining 28 counties join T-CAP as well. The Ohio House has inserted language in the budget that does just that: it expands the use of T-CAP for all 88 counties in Ohio, no longer making it a voluntary opt-in program. We strongly agree with this approach.

Expanding T-CAP for all 88 counties will improve correctional outcomes for those convicted of the lowest-level offenses and are in the most need of community treatment options, reduce prison overcrowding, and save taxpayer dollars along the way. We urge the Senate to retain this language in the final budget.

Respectfully,

Holly Harris  
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