



Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections

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By: Linda Janes, President

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Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services

Chair Stewart and esteemed members of the Ohio House of Representative Public Finance Committee:

I am Linda Janes, President of the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC) and Chief Operating Officer for Alvis, Inc. headquartered in Columbus, Ohio.

Thank you for providing OJACC with the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Governor DeWine's budget. We appreciate the administration's commitment to community corrections and recognition of the key role our agencies play in reducing the prison population and recidivism. The collaborative working relationship between the Ohio General Assembly, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and community corrections providers has led to Ohio's position as a leader in community corrections in the country.

OJACC serves as an umbrella organization representing Ohio's criminal justice stakeholders including judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, pre-trial and probation officers, law enforcement officials, corrections officials from adult and juvenile systems, treatment providers, reentry practitioners, and victims' representatives. OJACC focuses on collaborating with all stakeholders to inform policy makers and legislators on issues affecting community corrections. OJACC also provides education to community corrections practitioners to enhance services throughout the state. Our mission, for our nearly 40-year history, has been to promote and support effective community corrections in Ohio.

Briefly, community corrections encompass a full range of local sanctions that may be imposed by the courts and assist with successful reentry from jail or prison. These include supervision by a probation officer, drug or mental health treatment and other required programming, electronic home monitoring, community service, drug testing, as well as many other residential and non-residential sanctions designed to help change offender behavior. The sanctions and services are individualized based on the seriousness of the crime committed, the risks posed by the offender, and the specific needs to be addressed.

Adult Community Corrections in Ohio:

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC), through the Bureau of Community Sanctions, funds Community Based Corrections Facilities (CBCF), Halfway House Programs (HWH), and Jail and Prison Diversion programs for Ohio's Courts. In Fiscal Year 2024, these programs served nearly 54,000 individuals at substantial cost savings (as confirmed by DRC's Bureau of Community Sanctions)

Diverting appropriate individuals from prison to a residential or non-residential community corrections program often translates to cost savings for Ohio's taxpayers. CBCFs and halfway houses also provide intensive programming designed to change offender behavior and improve public safety. In the current version of the budget as introduced by the Governor, substantial funding has been allocated for several adult community corrections funding lines. This new

funding is appreciated and needed by all community correction agencies in Ohio. The increases to the CBCF and Reentry, Housing and Support services lines will enable those entities to improve staff recruitment and retention and address rising inflation.

Cost savings are even greater for individuals supervised on community control sanctions (probation) in a non-residential placement, rather than incarceration. Research demonstrates that programs designed to change offender behavior are most effective when offenders are supervised in the community. The funding increases in the Prison and Jail Diversion line will permit counties to expand and enhance the services already provided.

Juvenile Community Corrections in Ohio:

The juvenile system in Ohio has greatly reduced the number of youths in custody in Ohio's Department of Youth Services, (ODYS) through development of programs which place more options and greater control over adjudicated youth into the hands of local juvenile judges. While youth incarceration is commonly seen by some as essential for public safety, research suggests it is neither cost-effective nor beneficial in terms of outcomes.

Funding for alternatives to youth incarceration is provided by ODYS and is aimed at preventing first or subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system in Ohio. By diverting felony adjudicated youth, deemed safe and appropriate, from commitment to ODYS and into meaningful community programming, courts have greater subsidy dollars to allocate as they see fit to prevent future justice system involvement. OJACC supports funding increases which will expand and enhance the local options available to the juvenile justice system.

Mental Health, Substance Use Disorder and Medicaid Expansion:

Unfortunately, people with mental health and substance use disorders are over-represented in the justice system. It is estimated that 18% of the general population has a mental illness. However, an estimated 44% of those in jail and 37% of those in prison have a mental illness. It is also estimated that 63% of people in jail and 58% in prison have a substance use disorder. People with these disorders have challenges in getting appropriate treatment and often incarceration exacerbates their symptoms. This can lead to individuals staying incarcerated longer or being incarcerated more frequently than those without behavioral health concerns. (SAMSHA)

Given these statistics, in addition to the previously stated support of the community corrections funding lines, OJACC supports increases to funding that will enhance service delivery to those with mental health issues and/or substance use disorders. In addition, OJACC supports continuation of the Medicaid 1115 waiver which will allow those reentering the community to be connected with services and provided with medication prior to release, facilitating more successful reentry.

OJACC annually updates a Policy Platform Paper that we submit to all Ohio Legislators affecting areas that impact community correction policies and operation in Ohio. In conclusion, OJACC has

prioritized three platform areas to work with Ohio's Legislature to shape legislative changes to improve these areas as needed.

1. **OJACC continues to support adequate funding for both adult and juvenile community corrections, to maintain current quality services and foster future growth.**
2. **OJACC Supports Findings of the Ohio Juvenile Justice Working Group (JJWG).**
3. **OJACC supports continuation of the Medicaid 1115 waiver for inmates leaving prison, allowing for Medicaid paid services prior to release to facilitate successful reentry into the community.**

Please note, attached to this testimony is the full listing of OJACC's Public Policy Platform Priorities.

Chair Stewart and esteemed members, we appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on these critical issues. We appreciate the leadership each of you provides to the state of Ohio every day. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

Thank you!

Please forward any additional questions to:

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OJACC: Over 35 years promoting and supporting effective community corrections.