



Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections

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OHIO JUSTICE ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

TESTIMONY

HB96

SUBMITTED TO THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

By: Linda Janes, President

Chairwoman Abrams and esteemed members of the Ohio House of Representatives Public Safety 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 me with the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Governor DeWine's budget. We applaud the administration's commitment to community corrections and recognition of the important role our agencies play in reducing both recidivism and the prison population. 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.

ABOUT OJACC

In the mid-1980s, a group of community corrections practitioners and interested parties came together with state agencies to address the rising prison population. This group of dedicated professionals saw real value in coordinating all aspects of community corrections to work toward common goals and formed The Ohio Community Corrections Organization (OCCO) in 1986. In 2005, the non-profit organization changed its name to The Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC).

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 educate 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 over 40-year history, has been to promote and support effective community corrections in Ohio.

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

Community corrections include a full range of local sanctions that may be imposed by the courts. 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 and assist with successful reentry from jail or prison. The sanctions are individualized based on the seriousness of the crime committed, the risks posed by the offender, and the specific needs to be addressed.

Prison sentences protect the community from dangerous and violent offenders while the offender is in prison but do little to prevent offenders from committing crimes after they are

released from prison. Moreover, 95% of offenders who are sent to prison are eventually released and nearly half are released after serving less than one year.

Effective community corrections address the underlying issues which lead to criminal behavior. This may include drug or mental health treatment, or addressing criminal thinking, as well as educational and vocational issues. Effective community corrections also provide opportunities to hold offenders accountable. The sanctions can be tailored to the individual offender. For some, this may be a locked-down residential sanction, such as a community based correctional facility. For others, it may include a halfway house program. And for many, it may include outpatient programming and supervision by a probation officer.

Adult Community Corrections in Ohio:

Since the passage of the Community Corrections Act in 1979, Ohio has been committed to creating the most comprehensively funded community corrections system in the nation.

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 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.

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.

Additionally, these programs can serve as step-down release mechanism for Ohio's prison system to provide effective reentry services that help individuals convicted of criminal offenses become law-abiding citizens. The University of Cincinnati has conducted extensive studies of Ohio's community corrections programs. These studies demonstrate that, when used appropriately, community corrections programs can be highly effective in reducing recidivism and promoting public safety.

In the current version of the budget as introduced by the Governor, increased funding has been allocated for all adult community corrections funding lines. This new funding is appreciated by all community correction agencies in Ohio.

OJACC fully supports the needed increases to the 501-501 line included in the as-introduced

version of the Governor's budget. Increases of 4.4% in FY 2026, to \$104,015,600 and an additional 4% in FY 2027, to \$108,161,800 will put CBCFs on a path towards addressing issues of staff retention and increases in overall costs. CBCF Executive Directors have worked with ODRC to ensure all these increases will all go towards personnel costs and will demonstrate such to ODRC.

OJACC fully supports the increase to GRF line item 501-405 for Reentry, Housing, and Support Services. Increases of 3.6% in FY 2026, to \$87,700,200 and 3.3% in FY 2027 to \$90,558,100 will allow halfway house providers state-wide to invest in their operations to improve staff recruitment and retention and address rising inflationary costs. Halfway houses provide both a diversion opportunity and a much-needed reentry option to assist individuals in success upon release.

Community Corrections Act (CCA) 501-407 and 501-408 programs are primarily associated with probation departments that provide non-residential supervision and treatment in the community as a diversion for offenders who otherwise would be sentenced to prison or jail. OJACC supports the increases of 4.1% in FY 2026 to \$71,472,947 and 3.8% in FY 2027 to \$74,472,947 to the 501-407 line as well as increases of 5.0% in FY 2026 to \$10,101,000 and 4.5% in FY 2027 to \$10,555,545 to the 501-408 line.

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). In 1992, ODYS had nearly 2,600 youth in its facilities. As of February 2024, there were 523 youth in an ODYS facility and as of February 2025 there were 593 youth incarcerated in an ODYS facility—a sign of the increased need for community programming to address the issues confronting juvenile justice impacted youth.

OJACC supports the ODYS budget as submitted by the governor, which will fund many of the recommendations made by the Ohio Juvenile Justice Working Group (JJWG) as detailed in the OJACC Public Policy Platform dated December 2024 which is attached to my testimony .

The ODYS budget provides alternatives to incarceration which are demonstrated to be a more successful, and cost-effective solution for appropriate youth. The children in these programs often have significant mental health and special educational needs.

Medicaid 1115 Waiver

Ohio has an opportunity to make transformative changes by expanding eligibility for Medicaid services to individuals in prisons, jails, and detention facilities. The 1115 waiver allows for comprehensive coverage leading to reduced overdoses, less accidental deaths by overdose, safer and healthier communities, and savings to our state and local governments.

Please note, attached to this testimony is the full listing of OJACC's Public Policy Platform Priorities, many of which can assist the Ohio Legislature in exploring other legislative areas to address.

Ms. Chairwoman and esteemed members, we appreciate this opportunity to provide testify on these important issues. We appreciate the leadership each of you provides to our great 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