



**Eastern Ohio Correctional Center  
Wintersville, OH**

Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana,  
Guernsey, Harrison, Jefferson,  
Monroe, Noble

**Franklin County CBCF  
Columbus, OH  
Franklin**

**Lucas County Correctional  
Treatment Facility  
Toledo, OH  
Lucas**

**MonDay Community Correctional  
Institution  
Dayton, OH**  
Darke, Green, Miami,  
Montgomery, Preble, Fayette

**NorthEast Ohio Community  
Alternative Program  
Warren, OH**  
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Portage,  
Trumbull

**NorthWest Community  
Corrections Center  
Bowling Green, OH**  
Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Williams,  
Wood

**River City Correctional Center  
Cincinnati, OH  
Hamilton**

**STAR Community Justice Center  
Franklin Furnace, OH  
Nelsonville, OH**  
Adams, Athens, Brown, Clinton,  
Fairfield, Gallia, Highland, Hocking,  
Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs,  
Morgan, Pickaway, Perry, Pike,  
Ross, Scioto, Vinton, Washington

**Stark Regional Correction Center  
Louisville, OH**  
Holmes, Stark, Tuscarawas, Wayne

**W.O.R.T.H. Center  
Lima, OH**  
Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin,  
Mercer, Putnam, Paulding, Shelby,  
Van Wert

**West Central Community  
Correctional Facility  
Marysville, OH**  
Champaign, Clark, Delaware,  
Logan, Madison, Marion, Morrow,  
Union

## Senate General Government Budget Committee Testimony

### House Bill 110 Ohio Biennial Operating Budget Fiscal Years 2022-2023

Testimony of: Cary Williams

Executive Director

NorthWest Community Corrections Center

**Committed to Community Corrections Excellence**

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## Operating Budget Testimony

Good morning Chair Schaffer, Vice-Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate General Government Budget Committee. My name is Cary Williams, I am the Executive Director of NorthWest Community Corrections Center in Wood County, and a Trustee of CorJus, Inc. CorJus is a professional association that represents eleven publicly operated Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs) in Ohio. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on the state biennial operating budget, and to offer input on how CBCFs can provide a continued and increasingly vital role in serving local communities as the state of Ohio works to recover from the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first CBCF in Ohio dates to 1978 and was established to be a locally controlled entity. Today, CBCFs serve all 88 counties in Ohio and provide residential treatment to over 7,500 offenders annually, as well as several thousand more in a variety of outpatient programs. CBCFs provide the highest level of treatment dosage in the communities they serve. Through ingenuity and community collaboration, CBCFs have expanded their holistic treatment to include programs for substance abuse, cognitive restructuring, anger management, family reunification, general education, medication assisted treatment (MAT), trauma, and mental health, among many others.

CBCFs are effective at working with high risk, felony level offenders with a variety of criminogenic needs. These offenders are often at higher risk of recidivism within the system than their lower-level peers. Due to this risk, it is imperative that CBCFs always keep highly trained and specialized employees working with this population. Systemically, it produces a serious problem when the highly trained staff leave the CBCF to take higher paid jobs in the community, where they usually work with lower-level offenders.

CBCFs received funding through the 501501 line item of the General Revenue Fund in the state's operating budget. In the last biennial budget, the legislature graciously approved additional funding to the 501501 line item to provide wage increases for front-line CBCF staff. Unfortunately, due to pandemic related financial constraints, the second-year increase was withdrawn. We are grateful to the House for reinstating this increase in FY 22 and hope the Senate will concur on this line item. The restoration of this funding, in the amount of \$1,685,482, a modest 2.03% increase, will help to ensure highly trained and qualified staff continue to deliver quality service to our clients.

The importance of qualified staff in CBCFs has never been more apparent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CBCF staff were deemed essential and faced the daunting challenge head on. Staff worked closely with state and local partners to be able to operate safely under state guidelines. In addition to collaboration with health and safety experts, and like many organizations across the state, CBCFs faced financial constraints. While ODRC provided access to CARES Act funding to cover various costs, these funds were not able to be used to offset increases in personnel costs. Due to virus mitigation measures, facilities often had to increase staffing to cover quarantined areas, smaller group sizes, staff sick time, and additional areas to enable social distancing. Despite these obstacles, CBCFs remained open and operating, working to serve the needs of courts and communities. Even during the pandemic, the

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common pleas judges around the state continued to utilize CBCFs and viewed them as a valuable resource.

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected virtually all aspects of life for Ohioans. Beyond the immediate physical health effects and financial difficulties encountered over the last year, we are just scratching the surface on the impact the pandemic is having, and will continue to have, on substance abuse and mental health issues in Ohio. As we continue to work together to solve these problems, the role of community corrections has never been more important. The increase in substance abuse and mental health issues we are seeing will inevitably lead to more individuals being involved in the criminal justice system. Community corrections programs will continue to work hand-in-hand with judges and stakeholders to link those Ohioans to services which can help put them on the path to success. Access to treatment is more important than ever. To address these growing needs, the biennial budget must also look to the future. Expanding bed capacity in CBCFs allows increased access to programming opportunities.

We appreciate the increase provided to us by the House in this bill in FY 23 and ask for an additional investment of \$2,763,531 in the same year. This investment would provide funding for additional beds in CBCFs resulting in hundreds of additional prison diversion each year. More importantly, that will give hundreds more Ohioans access to treatment during this critical time. Many of these beds, funded and authorized by ODRC, are currently being constructed using previously appropriated capital budget appropriation dollars. To allow this investment to go unfunded would be detrimental to the many individuals waiting for access to treatment. An unexpected byproduct of the pandemic has been the reduction of prison commitments. An investment in CBCF bed expansion at this critical time would provide common pleas judges additional options to keep individuals in the community. This additional increase of \$2,763,531, on top of what was included by the House in FY 23, will also go towards competitive wage adjustments for staff and increases in overall operating costs. This brings the total for the request in FY 23 to \$5,763,531 (6.8%).

CorJus strongly believes CBCFs, as well as all of community corrections, will play a vital role as Ohio continues to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Investments of 2.03% in FY22 and 6.8% in FY23 in the 501501 line item would allow CBCFs to play a larger role in aiding the communities they serve.

Before closing my testimony, CorJus would like to thank ODRC for their continued support and collaboration. The steady leadership of Director Chambers-Smith and her staff have been invaluable. CorJus truly values the positive working relationship with ODRC and looks forward to our growing partnership.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I appreciate you allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony to you about the state operating budget and would be happy to take questions at this time.

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