



OHIO COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ASSOCIATION
TESTIMONY

HB 49

SUBMITTED TO THE
OHIO SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

By: Mike Randle
June 15, 2017

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am Mike Randle, President-Elect of the Ohio Community Corrections Association (OCCA) representing 39 nonprofit residential reentry treatment facilities, also called halfway houses, and community based correctional facilities (CBCFs). There are 18 CBCFs in Ohio, OCCA represents 5.

I am also Vice-President of Correctional Programs in Summit County for Oriana House, a Chemical Dependency and Community Corrections Agency with over 35 years of experience in this area. Oriana House currently operates programs in Akron, Cleveland, Fremont, Marietta, Sandusky and Tiffin.

As you have heard before, our clients are much more likely to have mental illness or substance use disorders than the general population. In fact, according to the Brennan Report (widely cited by Director Gary Mohr) "...79% of today's prisoners suffer from either drug addiction or mental illness, and 40% suffer from both¹." In Ohio, the result is a prison system with ten times as many mentally ill inmates as there are patients in the six psychiatric hospitals in our state.

Our research-based programs address behavioral health issues and are **proven** to reduce recidivism. Clients are able to work and/or attend school while participating in treatment, gathering resources and learning skills for successful reentry. This budget expands Ohio's capacity to provide services to individuals statewide struggling with the opiate addiction epidemic.

In light of lower than expected revenue projections we understand that the Senate was charged with making very difficult decisions regarding the prioritization of funding and that there were rational choices with the available dollars.

TARGETED COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON (TCAP)

We are enthusiastic supporters of Senate changes that include:

- Mandatory TCAP for the 10 highest committing counties and voluntary for any other county that wishes to participate.
- Removal of the overly complex waiver and "desired capacity" for jails
- Expansion of earned credit eligibility and removing the cap on the ability of inmates to earn credit
- Expanded options for treatment transfer programming for those who have not been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony offense of violence in the last 5 years
- Increasing funding for Substance Use Disorder treatment by \$1 million for ODRC institutional inmates

Director Mohr, the administration and the Ohio General Assembly, The Brennan Center for Justice, the Ohio Chamber, the Right on Crime conservative think tank, the Council of State Governments and the Buckeye Institute all recognize that the funding being diverted from prisons to community options is a wise investment given the better outcomes with respect to

reducing recidivism and getting individuals on track for productive law-abiding lives. In addition, Ohio's progressive approach is supported nationwide: A Pew Research Poll shows that voters across the U.S. are overwhelmingly in favor of strengthening community corrections programs (attached).

Prison and jail **diversion** is a much more effective approach for working with this group and other low level offenders. As Judge Rudduck of Clinton County stated, TCAP helps the "criminal justice system catch up with the science."

MEDICAID

Our members support the Senate changes that delay Behavioral Health redesign to January 1, 2018 with final rules crafted by October 2017 as we must take the necessary time to get this sea change in our state's behavioral health care system right.

We especially appreciate that the Senate is working to maintain the Medicaid expansion at this critical stage in our state's opiate crisis. **A recent *Columbus Dispatch* survey of state county coroners determined that at least 4149 Ohioans died from unintentional overdoses in 2016, representing a 36 percent increase from the previous year when Ohio led the nation in overdose deaths – 11 fatalities a day!** The continuation of the Medicaid expansion is vital to efforts to turn this tide. Any rollbacks in the expansion would also impact our clients' access to the healthcare and chemical dependency treatment services that have been shown to reduce recidivism and contribute to safer communities.

We urge passage of the TCAP language per the Senate Substitute bill as well as continued investment in Medicaid. Thank you for your time today. Additional questions may be directed to:

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Endnotes/References

ⁱ <http://www.brennancenter.org/publication/how-many-americans-are-unnecessarily-incarcerated> page 8

Public Opinion on Sentencing and Corrections Policy in America

2012 polling, consistent with 2010 research, indicates that voters are concerned first and foremost with keeping communities and people safe. Without question, voters want a strong public safety system where criminals are held accountable and there are consequences for illegal activities. They also believe that these goals can be reached while reducing the size and cost of the prison system.

A national public opinion survey conducted in January 2012, along with similar surveys in Georgia, Missouri, and Oregon, found those attitudes persist and revealed opinions on specific policy solutions.

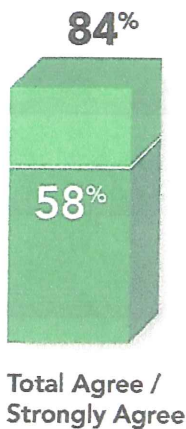
KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. American voters believe too many people are in prison and the nation spends too much on imprisonment.
2. Voters overwhelmingly support a variety of policy changes that shift non-violent offenders from prison to more effective, less expensive alternatives.
3. Support for sentencing and corrections reforms (including reduced prison terms) is strong across political parties, regions, age, gender, and racial/ethnic groups.

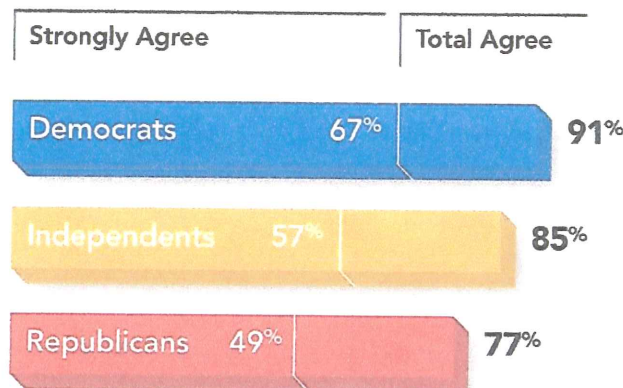
THE BOTTOM LINE...

"Some of the money that we are spending on locking up low-risk, non-violent inmates should be shifted to strengthening community corrections programs like probation and parole."

Overall



By Party Identification



By Region

