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Senate Bill 377
Proponent Testimony

Submitted to the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
By: Denise M. Robinson, President and CEO, Alvis, Inc.
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Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee; I am Denise M. Robinson, President and CEO of Alvis, a nonprofit human services agency. For more than 50 years, Alvis has been providing research-based reentry and related services that help individuals successfully transition back to our communities after spending time in the criminal justice system. I have been with Alvis for 36 years and have been President and CEO for the past 15 years. I am the Treasurer of the American Correctional Association (ACA) and was recently elected President-Elect. I am a Past President of the Ohio Community Corrections Association.

Today, I am testifying in support of the Transitional Control program and Senate Bill 377 sponsored by Senators Manning and Sykes.

Alvis operates programs in Columbus, Dayton, Chillicothe, Lima and Toledo, Ohio. Our service lines are: 1) Community and residential reentry programs for individuals with criminal justice involvement; 2) Integrated behavioral healthcare treatment (substance use and/or mental health disorder treatment); 3) Services for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities; 4) Workforce development and skills training programs for individuals with significant barriers to employment; and 5) Treatment and support programs for families impacted by a loved one's justice involvement and/or behavioral health diagnosis.

Alvis is committed to excellence and quality care to the individuals, families and communities we serve. The Alvis vision is that communities believe each person's potential is more important than their past. Our mission is to innovate and deliver evidence-based human service programs that empower those we serve to build successful and productive lives.

Community corrections programs, such as Alvis, provide individuals who are in the process of transitioning from prison to the community with a supportive environment and services that have been proven to reduce the risk that an individual will recidivate.

Everything we do at Alvis is research-based, evidence-informed and overseen by a range of federal, state, local and/or association licensing, certifying, and accrediting bodies. Our community corrections and halfway house programs are accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA) and our behavioral health treatment programs are certified by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).





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At Alvis, we take our responsibility to spend taxpayer money wisely and effectively very seriously. We are committed to making the communities safer while strengthening and making individuals and families healthier and more self-sufficient.

It is well established that individuals in the justice system are very likely to have substance abuse and/or mental health treatment needs. “The substantial prison population in the United States is strongly connected to drug-related offenses...85% of the prison population has an active substance use disorder or were incarcerated for a crime involving drugs or drug use”ⁱ The Brennan Report found that, “Seventy-nine percent of today’s prisoners suffer from either drug addiction or mental illness, and 40% suffer from both.”ⁱⁱ

Alvis programs for individuals with justice involvement address a person’s treatment needs while also holding the person to a standard of accountability and responsibility. Treatment plans are developed based on the results of each person’s score on the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS). Alvis’ research-based programs address behavioral health and other issues such as, cognition (patterns of thinking), education, workforce development, and family support needs. Addressing these needs through programming is **proven** to reduce recidivism.

One effective tool offered to local jurisdictions by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) is the transitional control (TC) program as created under ORC 2967.26. This permits eligible inmates to be transferred to a community corrections facility for up to the final 180 days of their sentence under TC status. Administrative rules disqualify sex offenders, offenses of violence, excessive felony convictions, and those serving mandatory sentences from participation in transitional control.

In the past two years (January 2019 through November 30, 2020), **1,760 individuals** (1,254 men and 506 women) **came to Alvis through the TC program** and stayed an average of 114 days. While at Alvis, these clients earned **\$2,343,063 in wages**, enabling them to pay restitution, child support, taxes, and other financial obligations. At the same time, they completed **1,080 hours of treatment programming** and **12,904 hours of community service**.

In contrast, **inmates whose participation in the TC program is vetoed by a judge will remain in prison** for the last 120-180 days of their sentence. Most will then be released directly back into their local community. They **will not have** the benefit of **effective case management** and **treatment services** provided in an environment that **stresses personal accountability**. They **will not be working, participating in programming and completing community service hours like the TC clients in Alvis programs**. Many may not even be under post release control or have the benefit of criminal justice supervision.





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Data suggests that, after applying the ODRC criteria, Ohio is sending the right individuals to the TC program, as evidenced by the low recidivism rate. Currently, inmates released from Ohio prisons have a recidivism rate of 31%. **By placing inmates in the TC Program, the recidivism rate is reduced to 16%.**

In summary, utilizing TC reduces prison crowding, saves money, effectively reduces recidivism, and starts an individual on the path to becoming a law abiding, tax-paying citizen.

Alvis joins with the Ohio Community Corrections Association to support allowing ODRC to have the authority to make administrative transfers including to transitional control.

Thank you for your time. If you have questions, please contact me by email at denise.robinson@alvis180.org or by phone at 614-252-8402.

ⁱ Center on Addiction, Behind Bars II: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population, February 2010. <https://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-research/reports/behind-bars-ii-substance-abuse-and-america's-prison-population>

ⁱⁱ How Many Americans Are Unnecessarily Incarcerated? December 2016. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/how-many-americans-are-unnecessarily-incarcerated>

