

Ohio Community Corrections  
Association

House Criminal Justice  
Committee

May 24, 2007

House Bill 130 Proponent  
Testimony

Presented By Denise Robinson

## **Introduction**

Chairman Latta and House Criminal Justice Committee members thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent today on HB 130. My name is Denise Robinson and I am President of Alvis House here in Columbus, with facilities in Chillicothe, Dayton and Toledo. I am also a past president of the Ohio Community Corrections Association (OCCA) and immediate Past President of the International Community Corrections Association.

I am here to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 130. As you may know, OCCA is a professional organization that advocates for and assists community corrections providers to function more effectively. OCCA was incorporated in 1973 to represent community corrections facilities throughout the State of Ohio by responding to the needs of the courts, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the offenders, and their communities.

## **Context**

OCCA represents some of the residential providers who serve 13,033 of the approximately 63,312 offenders currently in community corrections in Ohio. In an evaluation of halfway houses and community based correctional facilities there were definite factors that reduced the rate of recidivism. The positive effects of working re-entry programs are measurable in decreased crime and the repair of family structures. We are grateful to Sponsors White and Yates for introducing House Bill 130, as it provides tools to assist with keeping offenders employed and contributing to our society.

As you can see from the “Ohio’s Best Bargain” document, attached to my testimony, residential community corrections contributes a dollar benefit of \$10,319,570 in income earned, restitution, child support, taxes paid and court costs and fines and an additional 274,224 in community service hours. The benefits of a community correction sanction clearly outweigh the costs of incarceration.

## **History**

We have been partnering with the ODRC on the passage of re-entry legislation for the last 4 years<sup>1</sup>. Returning ex-offenders successfully back into the community is our goal.

Before the introduction of HB 130, OCCA contracted with Dena Hanley, a researcher from the University of Akron and former Hamilton County Prosecutor Mike Allen to compile a report on re-entry. Attached for your review is an executive summary of their study<sup>2</sup>. What the authors found is that:

- Ohio’s halfway houses were shown to save taxpayers millions of dollars.
  - Formerly incarcerated individuals who are employed can provide for their families, reducing the need for welfare resources
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- By providing treatment services in the community as well as closely monitoring the offender; **PRISON AND JAIL SPACE CAN BE RESERVED FOR SERIOUS AND DANGEROUS OFFENDERS.** Resources are an issue. There are severe space shortages both in county jails and prisons.
- An increasing body of evidence suggests that an easy response to “lock’em up,” either at the jail or prison level, does not improve successful adjustment of parolees and others under supervision so much as the use of a graduated sanction scheme when applied swiftly and certainly. This can be illustrated nationally in the research of Taxman et. al. (1999), Harrell et al. (2003), Burke (2004), and Hay (2001).

### **Operation of the bill – how this legislation will help**

House Bill 130 addresses the relevancy of obstructions that have been built in the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) by addressing two of the primary services necessary for re-entry Employment and Substance Abuse.

This proposal utilizes the lessons our state has learned from research on what works in changing offender behaviors by mandating treatment where applicable for drug addicted offenders, considering the offenders amenability to treatment as an indicator of future behavior, matching the sanction to an offenders assessment (done by a certified professional), encouraging employment for ex-offenders, allowing drug addicted persons to be under community control and limiting prison conveyance for those with a sentence of 30 days or less. Further, the bill eliminates unconstitutional bad time and creates a permanent voice on re-entry through study and reporting for ex-offenders integrating back into communities.

As Director Terry Collins stated “Reentry is a very productive way of conducting business in the world of corrections...Effective reentry requires a holistic approach with a set of practices, which link offenders as they move from the inside out and engage communities from the inside in...I truly believe that reentry is and will remain a major process that works to assist offenders, their families and other stakeholders in becoming participants in creating and sustaining safe, secure and successful communities where we all can live.” (Collins, Terry J. “The Reentry Movement in Corrections: Shift in Paradigm or Passing Fad?” *Corrections Today*, April 2007, p. 8-20)

OCCA is happy to lend its support to the many critical reentry components contained in HB 130. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2004, following a University of Toledo Collateral Sanctions Symposium (they found that almost 500 code sections prohibited employment in a range of jobs including asbestos abatement and scrap peddling, additionally benefits were terminated and civil rights abridged for persons that had already served their societal debt.), the Ohio Community Corrections Association convened a re-entry work group with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, The Ohio Supreme Court Specialized Docket Section, members of the General Assembly, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio and community correction providers in crafting legislation that would work to remove barriers to offenders returning as productive citizens.

<sup>2</sup> Copies of the full report *Reentry: Fighting Crime through Public Safety and Cost Effectiveness* are available by contacting OCCA.