

A Letter from Ohio Corrections Professionals to the State Legislature

[Date TBD]

Members of the Ohio General Assembly,

We write to you as current and former corrections professionals; we have served as directors, wardens, officers, and other staff in Ohio corrections facilities. Many of us have had direct involvement in executions, and we have all been part of institutions that are responsible for carrying them out.

Like few others in the state, we understand exactly what is being asked of public employees whose jobs include carrying out the lawful orders of the judiciary. We also understand, from our own personal experiences, the potential awful and lifelong repercussions that come from participating in state executions. We believe the death penalty imposes extraordinary and unnecessary stress and trauma on the Ohio corrections staff responsible for carrying out such executions.

Our first-hand, unique knowledge comes from overseeing executions, supporting our staff through executions, and discussing executions with our colleagues who have participated in them. We know that carrying out an execution can take a severe toll on corrections officers' well-being and can manifest in various ways over time. Living with nightmares is something that some of us experience – particularly those of us with more hands-on, intimate experience with the process, and/or where an execution under our supervision did not go smoothly.

As you know, corrections professionals are extraordinary people who dedicate their lives, and even risk their lives, to keep prisoners and the public safe. Executions put corrections officers in an exceedingly difficult position—the same officers who have protected the safety of people in prison are then asked to participate in the execution of someone who has lived under their care.

Our experience is that most of the people who are executed accept responsibility for the crimes for which they were convicted. Some, however, maintain their innocence until the end. These cases haunt us, and despite all efforts to prevent such, the risk of executing the innocent can only be avoided by not executing at all.

We fully and uniquely understand the challenge of managing people who are incarcerated and maintaining the safety of those who work inside prisons. Executions do no more to protect prison employees and incarcerated individuals than do appropriate prison management procedures, including proper evaluation of inmates, training of corrections employees, and fully resourced corrections departments. In fact, there are documented instances in which having the death penalty available has served as an invitation to a person, tired of life in prison, to threaten to commit violence as a way to achieve an early.

We urge you to seize the opportunity to repeal the death penalty in Ohio. In doing so, you will be doing a great service for your corrections employees, victims' families, and the criminal justice system. If we may be of assistance to you moving forward, please do not hesitate to call upon any of us.

Respectfully,

[signers to be listed in alphabetical order]

PLEASE ADD MY NAME TO THE LIST OF SIGNERS!

(Feel free to send this information via email – allison@otse.org)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name and Relevant Title(s): _____

Your City & County: _____

The following information is for internal use only. It will not be printed on the letter:

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