



# Department of Rehabilitation & Correction

Mike DeWine, Governor

Annette Chambers-Smith, Director

## Testimony on the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition.

### Sunset Review Committee

February 25, 2019

Chairwoman Roegner and members of the Sunset Review Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Ronette Burkes, Deputy Director of the Office of Reentry at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC). We are here today to testify on behalf of the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition.

We would like to begin by providing information regarding the makeup of the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition. The Coalition was created by HB 130 of the 127<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, is governed by R.C. 5120.07 and consists of 17 appointed members or their designees. The makeup of the Coalition includes directors from over 10 cabinet level agencies and two members from each legislative chamber. Additionally, the members serve without compensation. The funding sources for local coalitions currently vary, and many coalitions face routine challenges to secure support for their important work throughout Ohio communities. Thus, local coalitions are commonly reliant on federal and/or local funding.

Furthermore, the Coalition meets periodically for the purpose of formulating, discussing, and developing policies and practices that facilitate the expansion and improvement of reentry services provided by state and local agencies in the collaborative efforts of those agencies to reintegrate offenders into society. All of this while simultaneously maintaining public safety and reducing recidivism in this state.

The Coalition has consistently shown its value to the State of Ohio, and past work of the coalition includes the development of a five-year strategic plan (2009-2014). This document outlines core principles which are intended to guide stakeholders in addressing several reentry related areas that included but were not limited to: increased employment opportunity, increased participation in substance abuse services, increased family engagement in reentry, and increased participation in mental health services. The inherent principles of the coalition are grounded in collaboration and engagement with local communities. Notable success has been due in part to strengthening collaborations among key stakeholders and taking innovative approaches to offender treatment/service delivery. The establishment of these relationships have resulted in successful reintegration.



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The Coalition is consistently executing our strategic plan, but new ideas and brainstorming continue as coalition members examine opportunities to develop a continuum of supportive networks that lead to successful reentry and increased public safety.

The inherent principles of the coalition are also found in the mission of DRC which is to reduce recidivism among those we touch and its vision to reduce crime in Ohio. As such, DRC Director Annette Chambers-Smith actively serves in the role of Coalition chairperson as defined by statute. Director Chambers-Smith personally attends each meeting. Further, the Director is involved in the development of each meeting agenda and the identification of meeting priorities.

In conclusion, Chairwoman Roegner and members of the Committee: I would urge that the committee recommend reauthorization of the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition due to its importance in supporting the successful return of ex-offenders to local communities throughout the state. Thank you, and I would now be available to answer any questions you might have.