



# *CorJus, Inc.*

An Association of Community-Based Corrections Facilities

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Senate Finance and Financial Institutions Committee

HB 1 Budget Testimony of

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Chairman Carey and members of the Senate Finance and Financial Institutions Committee, my name is Bud Hite and I am the Executive Director of the Lucas County Correctional Treatment Facility and a member of CorJus, Inc. a non-profit organization representing several of Ohio's publicly operated Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs).

We are grateful to the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction for their commitment of scarce state resources to CBCFs which will enable us to open 220 constructed but unfunded beds. This commitment will allow CBCFs to assist more in alleviating prison overcrowding.

With today's prison population approaching 51,000 which is near an all time high, and bed capacity at 132% of the prisons' rated capacity, CBCFs and all Community Corrections are an excellent resource for reducing the prison population. In House Bill 1, there has been additional money added to the Community Based Correctional Facility line to open the remaining 220 constructed but unfunded beds. Opening these previously unfunded beds will result in diverting an additional 700 offenders from prison in addition to the 5505 already diverted by CBCFs last fiscal year.

The communities we serve need to know they are safe, and will not be further victimized by the offenders not sentenced to prison. CBCFs are in a very unique position to keep our communities safe as we combine punishment and treatment. While an offender is incarcerated in a CBCF, the offender is mandated to complete a rigorous treatment

regimen. Throughout the offender's incarceration, they are taught skills to deal with drug and alcohol addiction, to change criminal behavior, the ability to obtain a GED and to find viable employment. This is evidenced by the fact that during Fiscal Year 2008, just under 2000 of the offenders who completed a CBCF program left employed either full or part-time. And this took place during tough economic times. Through this employment, CBCF clients earned nearly \$2 million in wages, from which restitution was paid, court costs and fines were collected, and, most important, child support was paid. In addition, CBCF clients completed 223,398 hours of community service work. Offenders who leave a CBCF, are leaving tax paying, responsible citizens who are now contributing to the communities they once victimized and, in many cases, are working. You can't get any tougher on crime than that.

We do have one concern with Substitute HB 1 and that is the removal of the CBCF exemption from the collective bargaining statute. With the exception of Lucas County, CBCF's have always been exempt from the collective bargaining statute as a matter of operation. Unfortunately, in its current form, HB 1 proposes to remove our exemption from collective bargaining thereby requiring all 18 existing CBCFs to be subject to the definition of public employee for the purpose of the Public Employee collective bargaining laws. The budget allocates an additional \$7 million over the biennium to fund an additional 220 Community Based Correctional Facility beds. We remain committed to retaining each dollar increase to directly assist the prison overcrowding issue, but requiring CBCFs to be subject to collective bargaining will jeopardize our ability to do so.

In conclusion, I absolutely agree with Director Collins, when he indicates that CBCFs and all community corrections are a part of the holistic approach that encompasses providing punishment based options to Judges, prosecutors and the DRC to manage the prison population in a way that is sensible and does not compromise public safety. We ask that you support funding levels as they currently stand in HB 1 which will fund an additional 220 CBCF beds that are constructed but, until now, have been unfunded. We look forward to our continued partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and commend Director Collins and his team for their vision in recognizing that CBCFs can be a partner in addressing prison overcrowding.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for your time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.