



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Correction Officers placed on leave “did nothing wrong”

Two Correction Officers (COs) who were placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation into the suicide of Ariel Castro are being scapegoated and did nothing wrong, according to the union representing them.

The union and the two Correction Officers had been told by management earlier in the week that the two COs may be assigned to other posts within the institution temporarily. However, they were astonished to learn that the officers would actually be placed on administrative leave.

“The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction needs to do its job and stop blaming frontline staff for decisions being made at the top level. We don’t make decisions about mental health treatment. We don’t make decisions about protective custody. We don’t make decisions about whether an inmate should be on half-hour checks. COs have a job to do, and they do it. Now, DR&C needs to do *its* job,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe, a 20-year Correction Officer in the Ohio prison system.

While Castro was in protective custody, COs who were working that post were ordered to have minimal contact with him. Instead, Captains and Lieutenants brought Castro meals and transported him in and out of the cell. Yet, no other staff has been put out on administrative leave pending the investigations. DR&C has said it is undergoing three separate investigations into the suicide.

The two COs who were walked out of the Correction Reception Center yesterday where the suicide occurred have been working at the facility on their regular posts since the event occurred, more than a week ago. “That’s unusual given the importance of ensuring ‘chain of evidence’ during an investigation. Typically, when there is a question about a state employee’s involvement in an incident, he or she is put on leave immediately,” said Mabe.

“If these COs had done anything wrong, they would have been placed on leave a week ago. It’s obvious that putting them on leave is not justified. Worse than that, it now appears as if the COs are being scapegoated and used as a smokescreen,” said Mabe.

*OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 public employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions, including approximately, 8,000 in the DR&C. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).*