



PRESS RELEASE

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DR&C returns prison food service to vendor that overcharged state by \$2 million in 1998

COLUMBUS – Despite a competitive bid from the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association to save 11 percent on inmate meal costs without sacrificing safety or jobs, the Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction announced that an out-of-state private company will oversee food service operation in Ohio’s state-run adult prisons. Approximately 500 food service employees will be impacted by the change. The Dept. of Youth Services will retain state-operated food service.

The private company, Aramark, had previously been charged with overseeing food service operations at Noble Correctional Institution from 1998 to 2000. Their failed tenure resulted in rampant cost overruns, security problems and fraud, including charging the state for phantom inmates. With near-riot conditions as result, DR&C asked that OCSEA bring food services back in-house at a savings of 20 percent.

In order for DR&C to meet its stated savings target, a \$0.92 per meal cost in the first year (\$1.01 after the first year) must be met. Aramark’s bid came in well above that at \$1.20 per meal (\$1.24 in the first year).

“When you factor in the money it takes to maintain security and monitor the vendor as well as the money saved by Central Warehouse, it’s next to impossible for a private company to do what OCSEA members do for less money,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe. “The fact that the administration picked Aramark — the same company that overcharged the state by \$2 million in 1998 — shows what little regard they have for Ohio taxpayers.”

In addition to near-riot conditions in Ohio as the result of a failed food service pilot, inmates rioted over food cost and portion sizes as the result of Aramark food service operation in Kentucky, according to a report by that state’s auditor.

Currently, Food Service Coordinators receive the same security training as do Corrections Officers. To maintain this current level of security, DR&C would have to add 119 CO positions at an annual cost of \$7 million, a figure that was not accounted for in Aramark's bid. Nor did DR&C account for adequate monitoring that other states have said is essential for ensuring the company's contract compliance.

Choosing Aramark means the elimination of the state's Central Warehouse and thus considerable cost savings for the rest of state agencies that purchase food and supplies. Central Warehouse, operated by the Ohio Dept. of Mental Health, is utilized to distribute discounted food and supplies to all state prisons, 10 developmental centers, the Schools for the Blind and Deaf and Ohio Veterans' Homes as well as community-based correctional facilities.

"Food service is a vitally important part of running a prison," said OCSEA Corrections Assembly President James Adkins. "Our prisons are already overcrowded and understaffed. We can't afford to lose any more trained and experienced staff."

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OCSEA represents 30,000 state employees, including 8,000 members in DR&C and 600 in DYS. For more information contact Deirdre Wedig, 614-865-2604 or 614-886-1152 (cell).