



NEWS RELEASE

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Food service privatization announcement to be delayed

The Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation delivered the news to leaders of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association today that a controversial proposal to privatize food service in DR&C and the Ohio Dept. of Youth Services would be delayed for now. The announcement regarding which vendor would receive the contract or whether food service would remain state-operated was expected late this week. DR&C told the union that the vendor review process continues, and the announcement of who will win the contract – if anyone – will be put off until a later time.

“It could be days, it could be weeks. We just don’t know,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe. “What we do know is that this proposal was ill-conceived from the beginning and we oppose it 100 percent.”

OCSEA is calling on lawmakers involved in budget discussions to place a year-long moratorium on the food service privatization proposal until a legislative study group can complete a cost analysis. The analysis would include an examination of hidden transactional costs associated with privatizing food service including: transition costs associated with unemployment and retirement benefits; additional security costs; monitoring costs; and the cost to other state agencies who currently save money by using a centralized purchasing and distribution system run by the Ohio Dept. of Mental Health.

The union has said that private companies’ per meal costs don’t adequately account for transactional costs like monitoring and security. Instead, those costs are typically borne by the state agency and ultimately become a burden on the taxpayer.

The union has been critical of the privatization proposal that they believe would make an already dangerous prison system less safe. “Understaffing, overcrowding and continued assaults on staff are still making our prisons unsafe and putting employees at risk. A major system change like privatizing food service puts employees on even thinner ice,” said Mabe. “Not only are we watching over the safety and security of inmates, now we’re responsible for additional employees who can’t protect themselves.”

OCSEA represents approximately 33,000 public employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions, including approximately, 9,300 from DR&C and DYS. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).