



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
Sept. 18, 2013

OCSEA: prison suicide study “short-sighted”; broader reforms needed

Leaders of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association said today that an expensive review of suicides being commissioned by the Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction is like putting a Band-Aid on a gaping wound, since it likely won't address the broader issues of overcrowding and understaffing that plague Ohio's prisons.

DR&C has announced it will hire two out-of-state experts to study the rise in inmate suicides in Ohio's prisons. But the union says the study's scope is too narrow and doesn't involve the vast majority of DR&C employees in the discussion.

“This shouldn't just be a review of suicides. Violence in general is way up in our prisons. The murder rate is at a boiling point. This is a violent system across the board,” said OCSEA President Chris Mabe. “We need a broader discussion of policies and procedures that span across many areas, especially staffing, violence, overcrowding and staff training.”

“We don't need a study by more outsiders to tell us what we already know: that staffing and services have been reduced,” said Mabe. “We don't need a \$26,000 study to tell us that we need a more robust mental health system, that we need more staff, that we're overcrowded, that we're more violent. We know that. We need the commitment from this administration that it will make the changes necessary to keep us all safe,” said Mabe.

“The only time DR&C talks to us is when they are trying to discipline one of us,” said OCSEA DR&C Assembly President Jimmy Adkins, also a DR&C employee. “We want to be proactive, not be scapegoated at the end of a process. We want to be a part of the solution.”

“These folks conducting these studies have never walked a pod, never done a shake-down, never had bodily fluids tossed on them. They need to walk an hour in a Correction Officer's shoes,” said Adkins.

“The more things change, the more things stay the same. These are the same issues we talked about in 1993, prior to the Lucasville riot,” 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 Ohio DR&C. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).