



NEWS RELEASE

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State dismisses union food service proposal without serious review

Westerville – Exactly five months to the day after the state’s Corrections union submitted a food service bid to take back prison food service from the troubled vendor, Aramark, the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction informed the union by email and phone today that the union bid was not accepted. The proposal by the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association came in at \$1.216 per meal, well below Aramark’s cost of \$1.275 and would have saved \$2.9 million a year over the contractor.

Originally, DR&C told the union that an outside third party would review both the union proposal and Aramark’s. But several weeks ago the union learned that the accounting firm Crowe Horwath, which had been tasked with that review, backed out at the last minute. “That was our first red flag,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe. “No explanation was offered and we were left in limbo with only a couple weeks left before Aramark’s contract was up,” said Mabe.

Instead of getting an independent, external analysis that looked at both proposals, the Department of Administrative Services, the agency that actually holds the Aramark contract, would review only the union’s bid.

“We knew from that point forward, we weren’t going to get a fair or serious analysis,” said Mabe. “DAS is less qualified and more vested in the contractor than any other entity,” he said.

As expected, the DAS review made numerous false claims and assumptions about the union’s proposal and gave a heavy advantage to Aramark. First and foremost, DAS refused to assess the actual figures the union submitted for food costs. Instead of using the food pricing the union costed out based on today’s prison food menus, DAS analysts based their review on random food costs that the state incurred several years ago.

“The proposal that DAS assessed isn’t even our proposal,” said Chris Minney, a member of the union food service committee that submitted the bid. “A lot has changed in prison food service and food costs have come down. That was reflected in our bid,” she said.

For instance, practices that Aramark uses to lower food costs, like eliminating extra meals for worker inmates or not serving a special Christmas meal, were also adopted in the union’s bid. But DAS ignored the cost savings when the union included the practice.

In fact, DAS arbitrarily added a 42 percent upcharge to OCSEA’s food proposal, with no justification for doing so. DAS also applied costs to the union’s analysis that DR&C already pays for, such as current staffing.

“To add \$13 million based on food service cost past practices that don’t happen anymore is more than irresponsible,” said Adam McKenzie, OCSEA Researcher who also helped the OCSEA team with the bid. “This is not a reasonable analysis.”

“We believe this was a deliberate attempt to ignore our proposal, because we were clearly the cheaper option. We were simply not given serious consideration or any of the allowances that Aramark had been given and we are deeply disappointed,” said Mabe. “The union will be looking at all its options moving forward including through legal channels and the contract grievance process,” he said.

OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 state employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions, including 8,500 who work in the Ohio Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell). ##