



PRESS RELEASE

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Twenty years after Lucasville riot, DR&C gets failing grades in security and staffing

WESTERVILLE – Twenty years after one of the deadliest riots in U.S. history, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction continues to put staff and inmates at risk, according to a report card issued today by the union representing the majority of Ohio’s Corrections employees.

The Ohio Civil Service Employees Association used the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the “Lucasville riot” to talk about the lessons Ohio has learned (or forgotten) about prison safety, and to draw parallels between the system 20 years ago and today.

The riot at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in 1993 resulted in the brutal murder of Correction Officer Bobby Vallandingham, 12 employees being held hostage, and nine inmate deaths.

Back then, OCSEA made numerous recommendations to reform the prison system after the deadly incident. Today, their report reflects on whether those recommendations were implemented or continue to be utilized.

According to the union’s report card, DR&C has failed in the categories of “Staffing” and “Unit Management” and were given low a grade in the ability to respond to “Security Threat Groups.”

“Those areas where DR&C is failing or is being graded low are the same problem areas prior to the Lucasville riot,” said Mabe. “Low staffing, overcrowding, the inability to deal with Security Threat Groups, the emphasis on Unit Management and programming instead of focusing on security, all had a direct affect on the incident 20 years ago, and continue to affect our prisons today.”

Despite the addition of 904 employees to deal with severe understaffing in the aftermath of the Lucasville incident, the state has eliminated every single position gained since then. In fact, since 2001, the state has eliminated 1,675 Correction Officer positions, and the staff-to-inmate ratio has climbed to 1 officer for every 7.4 inmates from a low of 1 to 5.4 in 2001. Ohio’s ratio peaked at 8.8 inmates per officer prior to the Lucasville riot.

Additionally, sentencing reform passed two years ago has not reduced the inmate population as expected and has had a significant affect on security and violence levels. In Since Feb. 2013, there has been a significant increase in the number of inmates in state prisons.

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