



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Union calls for immediate halt to practices that left female Correction Officer alone with inmates

Westerville – The union representing the majority of employees who work in Ohio’s state prison are crying foul today after a female Correction Officer was taken hostage on Sunday morning at Mansfield Correctional Institution (ManCI). Leaders of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association are calling for an immediate stop to the practice of allowing officers to work alone with inmates.

“Not only is the practice unsafe, in this case, it was in direct violation of an agreement we had with the state,” said Doug Mosier, an OCSEA leader and local union president at ManCI.

The local chapter has already filed one grievance over the policy of “pull and move” that pulls Correction Officers off of permanent posts that can be closed when not needed (also called “utility posts”) and can leave areas understaffed. During Sunday’s incident, an officer on a utility post in the library was pulled to another post to provide religious programming, leaving his partner alone in the library with inmates. A permanent post at the chapel was eliminated several years ago.

“At the time they pulled the officer, all activity should have ceased in the library, but it didn’t. Obviously, the inmate saw an opportunity and took it,” said Mosier. “That is just not acceptable.”

“We have too many officers getting caught alone by predator inmates. When we see serious injuries to staff, it is often because they have been caught alone,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe.

The union is preparing to file a statewide grievance on DR&C’s “utility post” practice. Additionally, the union is calling for an expansion to the agency’s “working alone” policy to include not just social workers and teachers, but also Correction Officers. The policy currently only addresses staff traditionally involved in inmate programming.

Violence has increased at Level 3 prisons according to DR&C’s latest 3-Tier System report, including ManCI. In fact, violence levels at the facility are on track to double this year from 2014.

“Yesterday’s incident is a grim reminder of how dangerous Ohio’s prisons continue to be. It is thanks to the courage of that officer as well as the dedication of our special teams, that the incident was resolved without the officer being critically harmed,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe.

Union leadership was on the ground offering assistance during the critical incident that lasted nearly 11 hours.

“We have been saying for far too long that Ohio’s prisons are seriously understaffed. The staffing levels just don’t meet the needs of the operations. This incident is clear and convincing evidence of that,” said Mabe.

*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). ##*