



Department of
Youth Services

**Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS)
Testimony of Director Harvey J. Reed
Senate Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review
May 16, 2017**

Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review, my name is Harvey Reed. I am the Director of the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS). I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Governor Kasich's Budget for fiscal years 2018-2019. This budget equips the Department with continued funding for highly successful researched-based community programming while providing rehabilitative and educational opportunities for the youth in our facilities. In short, this budget allows DYS to sustain juvenile justice progress in Ohio and support public safety.

DYS is the state component of Ohio's juvenile justice system. It is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. The majority of our population is between the ages of 16 and 17; nearly half of our male population and virtually all of our female population have a mental health diagnosis. Furthermore, almost 50% of our students are receiving special education services. These attributes, combined with an average facility length of stay of 13.1 months, present significant challenges.

DYS is committed to providing young people with everything they need to successfully reintegrate into the community. Our facilities are accredited by the American Correctional Association and provide a variety of services and treatment for youth, including a fully-accredited high school, behavioral health services, medical and dental care, recreation, religious services, community service opportunities, victim awareness, and reentry services.

DYS has reduced the number of juvenile correctional facilities from 6 in FY 2010 to 3 in FY 2016. Currently, we have an average population of roughly 500 youth in facilities and 300 youth on parole, which is in strong contrast to our facility population of 1,125 youth in FY 2010. This significant decrease in the facility population has been driven by strategic community funding initiatives and has in turn allowed the Department to reinvest dollars previously spent on facility operations into highly successful community programs. The total costs for state facilities decreased in this timeframe by \$50.2 million. GRF funding to support communities increased from \$73.7 million in 2010 to \$82 million in 2016.

Through a true partnership between the Department and county juvenile courts, we have been able to change the landscape of juvenile justice in Ohio, serving more youth in the community and raising the bar with research-supported practices. DYS strives to positively impact the lives of youth in our three state-run facilities and four alternative placements; however, research shows that the majority of youth in the juvenile justice system are more effectively served in a community setting.

DYS has invested in an array of complementary community initiatives to reach youth, support families, and build communities. Whenever possible, youth who are at lower risk to reoffend are served with appropriate treatment closer to their families and communities. Evaluation results have shown that youth have a drastic decrease in reoffending if they are allowed to remain close to home and their family support system. To provide youth with this opportunity, the Department funds local communities through interwoven initiatives including RECLAIM Ohio, the Youth Services Grant, Targeted and Competitive RECLAIM, Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice (BHJJ), and 12 state-funded Community Corrections Facilities (CCFs). Community alternatives range from services to divert at-risk youth from court involvement to interventions that divert felony youth from DYS commitment.

Much of the success in transforming juvenile justice is attributable to RECLAIM and its research-based expansions. RECLAIM is a funding initiative which incentivizes juvenile courts to provide a range of community-based options to meet the needs of each juvenile offender or youth at risk of offending. By diverting youth from DYS facilities, courts have the opportunity to maintain state funds locally. Building on the success of RECLAIM, the Department has supported the Targeted RECLAIM initiative that funds evidence-based interventions focused on risk and need principles. The program supports courts that have historically committed the most youth to the Department and that have committed to reducing and maintaining those reductions in DYS admissions. The newest phase of RECLAIM, Competitive RECLAIM, provides financial support to juvenile courts and local communities for research-backed services to meet the needs of youth and families. Each program includes an evaluation component to ensure that it is implemented with fidelity and produces the intended results.

To help address a sector of multi-system youth in Ohio, the BHJJ initiative equips participating communities to engage in early identification, assessment and model home-based intervention with youth experiencing both behavioral health and juvenile justice challenges. Evaluations of BHJJ and our other investments in the community continuum have consistently supported their use as a means to treat youth locally. In fact, a 2014 study conducted by the University of Cincinnati that examined just over 10,000 youth who had come in contact with the juvenile justice system concluded that RECLAIM programming is an extremely cost effective commitment option, which takes into account the low rate of recidivism of RECLAIM programs. Ultimately, the study found that **for every dollar spent on RECLAIM, the state saved between 13 and 57 dollars compared**

to incarceration. The funding provided in this budget will allow us to continue to support this highly effective and fiscally responsible programming.

DYS offers a wide array of educational opportunities for our youth in facilities. In calendar year 2016, a total of 30 youth earned high school diplomas and 66 youth earned GEDs. DYS also provides opportunities for graduates to participate in college classes offered through a partnership with Ashland University. Research shows that leaving with a high school diploma or a GED is the single most effective tool to combat recidivism.

We evaluate each youth's educational background at intake to determine the most appropriate educational programming. Many youth are suited for a career technical track, and we offer programs that help students obtain entry-level job certificates in fields such as food service, building trades, horticulture, green energy and computer repair. In total, 430 career technical certificates were awarded in 2016. We also offer a total of five formal apprenticeship opportunities for youth to prepare for employment as cooks, groundskeepers, maintenance workers, janitors, and recovery (recycling) operators. Additionally, DYS provides a variety of post-secondary transitional opportunities for youth who are on both college and vocational tracks. Last year, a total of 91 youth were able to participate in introductory college courses.

Faced with having to make difficult budget decisions, the House made across-the-board cuts to our GRF line items. We believe that a more targeted approach will be more fiscally responsible in the long-run. We understand the budget uncertainty that the Senate is now tasked with addressing, and we stand ready to work with the Senate, but we ask that our community funding line items, in particular, be held flat in line with the Governor's proposed budget.

Cuts to those line items will directly impact our DYS population in that courts will send more youth to DYS facilities due to fewer available diversion dollars. In short, courts will be faced with less funding for options that are alternatives to DYS facilities.

Any temporary "savings" garnered by reducing funding to RECLAIM, Youth Services Grant, Targeted RECLAIM or CCFs would cost the State more in the long-term with our need to create more beds at DYS. Our agency has responsibly utilized community grant dollars as evidenced by the fact that RECLAIM (since FY08) and Youth Services Grant (since FY01) funds to courts have not seen any increase despite increases in the costs of services, staff, etc.

DYS strives to continue moving forward with system-wide reforms that have transformed DYS into a model for other states. DYS will make efficient use of every taxpayer dollar and explore opportunities for cost savings, while maintaining its ability to fulfill its mission. The Governor's proposed budget supports helping these young people change their lives as we set out to build a safer Ohio.

I would like to thank the many groups who have been supportive of our initiatives and who partner with us to give youth everything they need to succeed. We appreciate the open and honest dialogue with these partners, which include family members of youth, OCSEA/AFSCME, SEIU/1199, OEA, the juvenile courts, community partners, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the committee, I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. My staff and I are available to answer any questions you may have at this time.