

June 24, 2019

## BUDGET BITE: REHABILITATION AND CORRECTIONS

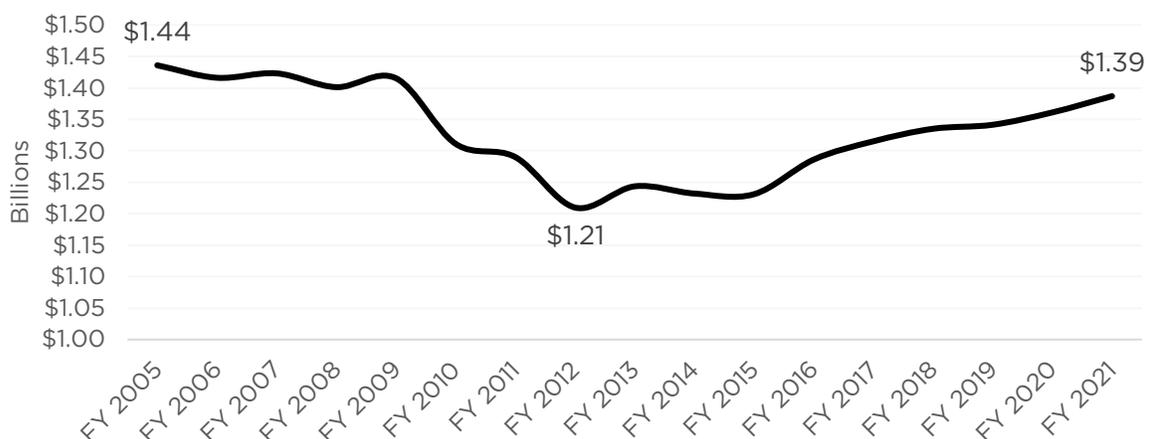
### PIET VAN LIER

Ohio locks up a [larger share](#) of our neighbors than all but 13 other states and only two states have a higher share of people on probation: our punishment-based system incarcerates too many Ohioans, leaves prisons overcrowded and unsafe for inmates and guards, and damages communities. Ohio will spend more than \$1.8 billion a year over the next two years to keep nearly 50,000 people in prison through the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC). House Bill 166, the budget bill making its way through the General Assembly, reflects the needs of an overcrowded prison system and growing attempts to provide more appropriate strategies.

Governor Mike DeWine called for an increase of [\\$249 million](#) over the prior biennium, an increase of 7 percent (not adjusted for inflation). The budget passed by the House largely follows the course charted by the DeWine administration, [adding just over \\$15 million](#) to the executive’s DRC budget. The Senate’s budget tracks the House version closely, changing only one line item with a reduction of approximately \$1 million. This shared focus helps to restore funding, which still lags earlier years even though the prison population has grown. The state is spending \$49 million (3.4 percent) less, adjusted for inflation, than in 2005, when the prison population was [44,000](#), about 5,000 fewer inmates than [in 2019](#).

### State funding of DRC remains lower than in 2005, adjusted for inflation

High prison population leads state to focus on alternatives in budget



Source: Policy Matters Ohio, based on Ohio Legislative Services Commission, Historical expenditures in the GRF (including federal dollars), deflated using CPIU-RS. Projected inflation for 2020-21 based on forecasts in the initial LSC budget forecast

## INCREASES FOCUSED ON ALTERNATIVES, MEDICAL CARE AND EDUCATION

The DRC budget proposed by the DeWine administration and supported by the House and Senate moves the state's criminal justice system in the right direction by increasing funding for alternatives to incarceration in the state system, and for medical and educational services for incarcerated individuals. Increases to line items highlighted below are given for the two-year budget period in comparison to the current biennium.

- **Community Nonresidential Programs:** \$16.4 million in new money over the biennium (an increase of 16 percent over current funding). These are grants to counties to operate intensive supervision and community sanctions programming in lieu of prison or jail for those convicted of felony offenses.
- **Parole and Community Operations:** \$10.5 million increase (up 6 percent over current funding). These funds support release and community supervision services, community sanctions assistance and victim services, and the Adult Parole Authority.
- **Halfway House:** \$12.1 million in new funds, (a 9 percent increase over current funding) to serve people released from state prisons, referred by courts of common pleas, or sanctioned because of a parole violation. Halfway houses support 2,329 beds and provide services like drug and alcohol treatment, electronic monitoring and job placement. In FY 2018, they served about 9,900 people through the criminal justice system.
- **Community Residential Programs (Community Based Correctional Facilities):** An additional \$10.8 million, (up 7 percent over current funding). These funds are distributed as grants to counties for facilities to divert people from prison. In 2018, the 2,680 beds in 18 facilities were used in the diversion of approximately 7,700 people.
- **Institution Education Services** increased by \$2.3 million (3.5 percent over the current biennium). Funds are used to provide basic, vocational, and post-secondary education services to those in the state's prison system. The budget passed by the House saw an increase of 5 percent, more than the increase proposed by the DeWine administration, but the Senate scaled that increase back.
- **Institution Medical Services:** Up nearly \$31 million (6 percent more than the current biennium). This pays for medical services for incarcerated individuals and specialized care outside prison facilities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Correctional policy in the biennial budget for FY 2019-20 appears to emphasize improvements in areas that move the state's justice system in the right direction, although bolder steps are needed, either in the budget or in other legislative efforts.

1. The DRC proposal drafted by the Senate, the House and the DeWine administration will help address the capacity of Ohio's overcrowded prison system and should remain in the final version of the budget signed by Gov. DeWine.
2. Throughout the biennium, [sentencing reform](#) could rebalance the system. Funding to boost community and parole systems is critically important to those efforts and needs to be protected and strengthened.
3. Wrap-around services for drug treatment, housing and job training should be tightly integrated with community based correctional services.