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Testimony before the Ohio Legislature Multi-System Youth Committee
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Good morning Chair Gardner, Vice Chair LaTourette and members of the Committee. My name is Erin Davies and I am the Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Coalition. As an active member of the stakeholder group that has been meeting regularly on multi-system youth issues, I have the pleasure of opening today's hearing. Thank you very much for your continued focus on youth involved in multiple systems in Ohio.

The good news for the Committee is that we know what works for youth in various systems of care. In recent years, research has identified best practices that can ensure youth get the right services in the right amount at the right time and in the right setting, and work well to help youth get on the right track. Ohio has made progress with embracing programs that align with these principles; today's hearing will focus on an overall framework for how the state and communities can assure these services are available, and touch on some specific program examples shown to improve outcomes for Ohio's youth, families, and communities. For example, in the juvenile justice field, Ohio has five deincarceration programs that have worked to reduce the number of youth in Ohio's juvenile correctional facilities from over 3,000 youth to under 1,000 youth since 1992. These programs are summarized in Figure 1.

However, before we get to what works, it is critical for the Committee to understand what is at stake if we do not fully embrace evidence- and outcome-based programs for all youth. Using the juvenile justice system as an example, Figure 1 shows that Ohio's five deincarceration programs do not reach youth in all counties across the state, particularly with regard to research-driven programming.

In addition, despite current efforts, Ohio still spends 40% of the Department of Youth Services' budget on incarcerating less than 500 youth, an average cost of just under \$200,000 per youth per year [see Figure 2]. The youth in these facilities are the definition of multi-system: nearly half are on the special education caseload and 50% – 47% of boys and 100% of girls – are on the mental health caseload. Over 60% of youth in DYS facilities are Black, despite Black youth being only 17% of Ohio's youth population. In these facilities and other similar facilities like detention centers, youth are disconnected from positive community supports and are more likely to be exposed to negative practices, such as solitary confinement, that can create or exacerbate trauma or mental health issues. Nearly 50% of youth will be reincarcerated in either an adult or

juvenile facility within three years. Despite these continuing needs, DYS's budget was reduced by \$32 million in the last budget cycle – funding that could have gone to expand successful programs for Ohio youth in the juvenile justice system and beyond.

The juvenile justice system is not alone in these struggles and often becomes the fallback system when other community supports, such as mental health or substance use programs, do not meet youths' needs. Previous hearings have highlighted families who have had to consider relinquishing custody of their child to access services. We cannot afford to continue to invest valuable state resources in approaches and programs that produce negative outcomes for youth and families. As a state, we must make concerted, comprehensive efforts to direct funding to effective, up front investments that will pay off not only monetarily, but in social capital and overall well-being for our children and all Ohioans. Ohio's children and families deserve no less.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to learn more about how communities and the state can approach this question of ensuring that youth get the services they need. You will hear about the continuum of care concept, what evidence-based means and some examples of evidence-based programs, what structure some local communities use to coordinate services, and some recommendations to consider.

Thank for again for this chance to highlight issues facing Ohio's youth.

Figure 1: Overview of Ohio's Deincarceration Programs

| OVERVIEW OF OHIO'S FIVE DEINCARCERATION PROGRAMS | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|
| | PROGRAM | YEAR STARTED | ANNUAL YOUTH SERVED | ANNUAL FUNDING (FY15) | OUTCOME OR EVIDENCE BASED? | OUTCOME/GOAL | COUNTIES REACHED (OUT OF 88) | DISTRIBUTION |
| SUBSIDY PROGRAMS | Youth Services | 1980-81 | 80,000 YOUTH | \$16.7 million | NO | Provide basic court needs | 88 | Population |
| | RECLAIM | 1995 | | \$38.6 million | NO | Reduce admissions to correctional facilities | Up to 88 | Formula |
| COMPETITIVE PROGRAMS | BHJJ | 2005 | 250 YOUTH (average) | \$2.6 million | YES | Improve treatment for youth with high levels of need | 12 | Competitive |
| | Targeted RECLAIM | 2009 | 748 YOUTH (2012) | \$8.4 million | YES | Reduce admissions to correctional facilities | 15 | Counties with the highest number of youth adjudicated delinquent or felonies |
| | Competitive RECLAIM | 2015 | | \$2.2 million | YES | Create 1) diversion programs for low-risk youth, 2) intervention programs for moderate- and high-risk youth, and 3) multi-county collaborations. | 24 | Competitive |

Figure 2: DYS Annual Budget Distribution

