



**Juvenile Justice Coalition:
Statement on CIIC Amendment to HB 547**

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“No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails.” – Nelson Mandela

The Juvenile Justice Coalition (JJC) is deeply concerned about an amendment to HB 547 that would redefine the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC). Each year, Ohio taxpayers spend millions of dollars incarcerating adults and children in DRC and DYS prisons. Unfortunately, research has shown that these facilities often do not reduce recidivism and are vulnerable to conditions that harm the individuals held there, even with independent oversight. Erin Davies, Executive Director of JJC, said “Too often, Ohioans who are held in these facilities – including children – are forgotten, even though the vast majority of them will return to our neighborhoods in the very short term.”

The independent, bipartisan oversight and accountability provided by CIIC is critical to visit Ohioans held in adult and youth prisons to ensure they are receiving adequate care and being treated fairly. In the juvenile justice field, DYS recently successfully settled a lawsuit about conditions in its facilities. DYS has made substantial, positive progress in how youth in its care are treated, but continued oversight is critical to ensuring these significant gains are maintained. This oversight is particularly critical given the amount of funding at stake; incarcerating one youth in a DYS facility for one year costs Ohio taxpayers nearly \$200,000, the equivalent of nine years of undergraduate education at The Ohio State University.

Tammy Fournier-Alsaada was incarcerated in a DRC facility and currently works as a Community Organizer with JJC. Tammy’s son also served time in a DRC facility. Tammy said “Living in a state where accountability and humanness is not at the forefront of what we do is not acceptable. As a mother, I don’t think I could’ve slept at night for 3 years while my son was locked away in an institution without knowing people were being held accountable for his safety and well-being.”