

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/conditions-continue-worsen-privately-owned-lake-erie-correctional-institution>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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CONNEAUT, OH - The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio is calling on the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) to fully investigate a series of troubling reports emanating from Correction Corporation of America's (CCA) privately owned Lake Erie Correctional Institution, including today's report of an inmate death, possibly from a drug overdose.

This facility was audited in September and dozens of safety, health, and security issues were found, said ACLU Director of Communications and Public Policy Mike Brickner. Now an inmate is dead. Clearly, there are systemic problems within this facility and they need to be addressed.

The September audit at Lake Erie Correctional discovered unsafe conditions not only for inmates, but for prison staff as well. Highlights from the list of nearly 50 violations included inadequate medical care, dirty living conditions, and lack of staff training.

For a follow-up audit in November, the facility made superficial corrections to some of the violations. Unfortunately, many of the systemic violations involving medical care and staffing were not addressed or simply left as pending. These larger problems are indicative of issues the ACLU of Ohio and other advocates pointed out as fundamental flaws with private prison operators.

Running a safe, secure prison with proper medical care takes resources, said Brickner. The private prison model is built on profit above all else, meaning they will cut corners to maximize profits. Unfortunately, when medical care and safety protections are cut, tragedy often occurs. While safety violations may happen at any facility, private prisons are often less equipped to properly handle them and ensure they do not happen again.

There is a reason Ohio leaders have suggested they may not privatize more state-owned prisons, added Brickner. Whether or not they are willing to admit it yet, this is not a sustainable model. It puts short term profit ahead of good public policy and it works against the real efforts Ohio is making to shrink inmate population and reduce recidivism.

In 2011, the ACLU of Ohio released a report entitled [Prisons For Profit: A Look at Prison Privatization](#). The report details the history of private prisons in America and concludes that they create many long-term problems for state and local governments. In 2012, Ohio became the first state in the nation to sell a state facility to a private prison company.

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