

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/ohio-should-end-contract-prison-private-food-vendor>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

[Skip to main content](#)

COLUMBUS, OH Today, the ACLU of Ohio urged the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) to end its contract with Aramark Correctional Services, the prison systems private food vendor, after months of documented problems. News reports on Monday indicated that maggot infestations were found in Aramark food in two Ohio prisons, including two separate incidents at the Ohio Reformatory for Women and one incident at the Trumbull Correctional Institution. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated problem for Aramark in Ohio. Last week, nearly 30 prisoners at Parnell Correctional Facility in Jackson, Michigan became sick with food poisoning shortly after maggots were found in Aramark food at the facility.

This is not an isolated incident that prison officials can expect to solve without taking broader action. Aramarks long track record of incompetence and unsanitary conditions is well documented, said ACLU Senior Policy Director Mike Brickner. Officials have already tried to hold Aramark accountable by levying steep fines and that has not worked. It is time we recognize this experiment has failed and cancel the contract.

In April 2014, the state revealed it had [fined private food contractor Aramark](#) over \$142,000 for falling short of quality levels and creating unfortunate operational challenges in Ohio prisons.

Other problems with Aramark have emerged recently. Incident reports from May 2014 show that prisoners at the Warren Correctional Institution were served peanut butter, wheat bread, and water for breakfast, falling short of required nutritional obligations for prisoner meals. According to the incident reports, Aramark claimed that the morning truck had not arrived with food for breakfast. As a result, corrections officers suspended breakfast services for several hours until adequate food arrived.

The state privatized prison food services in 2013, but this was not the first time they have experimented with Aramark as a vendor. The state previously contracted with Aramark for a [failed two-year food privatization experiment](#) at the Noble Correctional Institution. This experiment was abandoned in 2000 because of budget overruns and poor food quality.

Aramarks failures not only put prisoners health and well-being at risk, they also jeopardize the safety of employees at the prisons, said Brickner. We must treat those we incarcerate with basic human dignity. Food riddled with maggots, scant portions, and constant incompetence is simply unacceptable. We must demand better from the state.

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