

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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## Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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CLEVELAND The Ohio Senate Criminal Justice Committee met on Wednesday, November 30th and slipped an amendment into an arson-related bill (House Bill 185) that would allow more people to be housed in prisons for profit. HB 185 would pave the way for Ohio to contract with Core Civic (formerly the Corrections Corporation of America) to fill beds at the Northeast Ohio Correctional Center (NEOCC). HB 185 is now headed to the Senate for a full vote.

Ohio prisons are bursting at the seams. They're at 130% capacity, housing over 50,000 prisoners in a system built for 38,000. Sending these prisoners to a private prison, whose sole mission is to reap profits from incarceration, does not address the underlying problem in our overcrowded prisons, and may actually make it worse, said Jocelyn Rosnick, assistant policy director of the ACLU of Ohio. Ohio prisoners could now be sent to a prison with a troubling history which was deemed unfit for federal prisoners even though the structure and the operation of the prison remain unchanged, said Rosnick.

NEOCC has had vacancies since the Federal Bureau of Prisons declined to renew its contract with the facility in 2014, and with the passage of HB 185, Ohio could effectively bail out the prison for profit.

HB 185 would not only allow Ohio to use more prisons for profit, it also eviscerates the requirement for private prison corporations to save the state 5% in costs. Now the state would merely need to attest that the contract will reduce prison overcrowding. Instead of contracting with private prison corporations who benefit from overcrowding, we should be tackling the inherent problem of mass incarceration and seeking ways to reduce Ohio's growing prison population, said Rosnick.

Prisons for profit allow corporations to make big money on the backs of tax payers while hurting the civil liberties of those who end up in private prisons across Ohio, added Rosnick.

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