

OHIO

CRIMINAL SENTENCING COMMISSION

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Ms. Juliene James, Senior Policy Advisor
Bureau of Justice Assistance
810 Seventh Street NW
Washington, DC 20531

Mr. Adam Gelb, Project Director
Pew Center on the States
901 E Street, NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20004-1409

Dear Ms. James and Mr. Gelb,

We are writing to express the interest of state leaders in Ohio to reengage in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) and strategies that enhance public safety and maximize criminal justice resources. Ohio enjoys a history of state leaders working across party lines and branches of government to advance realistic, forward thinking approaches that are data driven, consensus based and employ bipartisan decision making – all of which are consistent with the guiding principles of JRI.

Ohio's commitment to the principles of Justice Reinvestment began in 2008 when leaders from all three branches of government sought the assistance of the Council of State Governments Justice Center. By 2011, the General Assembly passed the most significant sentence reform legislation since the mid-1990s, HB86. Accordingly, Ohio invested approximately \$22.6 million in grants to support programs that reduce probation violations between FY 2012 and 2015 through those reforms. However, Ohio has not realized the expected reduction in prison population and according to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, in 2015, more than 20 percent of all those entering Ohio's state prisons – over 4,300 individuals – were sent there with one year or less to serve, and many for non-violent offenses at the lowest felony level.

We, as State of Ohio leaders, recognize that collecting and analyzing criminal justice data leads to informed administrative and legislative policy decisions and recommendations. As this letter indicates all three branches of government are supportive of a reengagement of the JRI process in a manner tailored to needs of our state, which includes endorsement of the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission to propel Ohio's next phase of criminal justice reform. The Commission can and will ensure the principles and strategies of JRI are realized, utilized and maximized.

The Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission (the Commission), per Ohio Revised Code, Chapter 181, was established in 1990 by the General Assembly. The Commission is a 31 member group chaired by the Chief Justice of Ohio. Ten members of the Commission are judges appointed by the Chief Justice, 12 members are appointed by the Governor, 2 cabinet directors, 2 state agency leaders as well as 4 members of the General Assembly serve on the Commission. It is responsible for reviewing Ohio's sentencing statutes and sentencing patterns, and to make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding statutory changes. The Commission routinely brings together judges, prosecuting and defense attorneys, behavioral health professionals, academics, corrections officials, law enforcement, victims' advocates, community corrections experts, and others with a direct interest in criminal sentencing and, therefore, bridges the information gap among criminal justice partners (the Commission roster is attached).

The Commission is bipartisan and promotes meaningful informed processes and outcomes through creative solutions. It is well-positioned to lead and advance Ohio's renewed interest in JRI because since

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its inception, it has provided impartial and consensus-driven analysis and development of policies and practices that maximize public safety, reduce recidivism and equalize justice.

We propose the CSG Justice Center return to our great State to explicitly focus on what is happening before prison or in other words, the system's "front end" where many decisions are made that impact both future judicial and corrections practices. That focus should include reported crime, arrest, and criminal history; diversion, including deferred adjudication; assessment for risk and behavioral health assessment at the pretrial stage; how sentencing sorts people with convictions across the various sentencing options; capacity of treatment and programs in the community to reduce recidivism; and community control.

Ohio agrees to provide CSG with access to available data for analysis and will ensure rejuvenation of the Justice Reinvestment advisory implementation, oversight and collaborative workgroup under the purview of the Commission, which will provide a strong platform for continued criminal justice reform in the State of Ohio. In exchange, we expect CSG will identify recent criminal justice system trends in Ohio as well regionally and nationally; conduct research and analysis of the Ohio corrections, community supervision and justice involved populations; help craft policy options to enhance public safety while wisely parsing limited resources including practitioner education; facilitating development of recommendations based upon data and research, projecting impact of policy options on correctional and supervision populations, including projected averted costs; and assist in drafting findings and recommendations in a final report.

Ohio is committed to build on a consensus-driven platform for the development of policies, practices and legislative criminal justice reforms that maximize public safety, reduce recidivism and wisely spend tax resources. We welcome and appreciate your support to return to Ohio for technical assistance. The Commission is well positioned to advance this effort and can begin at the earliest possible date.

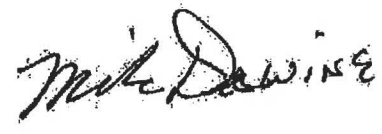
Sincerely,



John Kasich
Governor of Ohio



Maureen O'Connor
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio



Mike DeWine
Ohio Attorney General



Larry Obhof
President of the Ohio Senate



Clifford Rosenberger
Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives

Attachment: Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission 2017 Roster