

Representative Clifford A. Rosenberger
Speaker of the Ohio House Representatives
77 S. High Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 42315

Senator Larry Obhof
Ohio Senate President
1 Capitol Square, 2nd Floor
Columbus, Ohio 42315

Representative Bill Seitz
Ohio House Majority Floor Leader
77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 42315

Senator Randy Gardner
Ohio Senate Majority Floor Leader
1 Capitol Square, 2nd Floor
Columbus, Ohio 42315

Representative Fred Strahorn
Ohio House Minority Leader
77 S. High Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 42315

Senator Kenny Yuko
Ohio Senate Minority Leader
1 Capitol Square, 3rd Floor
Columbus, Ohio 42315

June 20, 2017

Dear Representatives Rosenberger, Seitz and Strahorn and Senators Obhof, Gardner and Yuko:

As Reform Jewish clergy from across the State of Ohio and as leaders in Reform Ohio, we to urge you to keep the **Targeted Community Alternatives to Prison (TCAP)** program at least as strong as it is in the State Senate's budget bill (Sub. H.B. 49). TCAP brings much-needed reforms to Ohio's criminal justice system, will reduce incarceration and increase public safety.

Reform Ohio is the statewide social justice project of the Reform Jewish movement, which includes over 40 congregations in Ohio, encompassing more than 45,000 Reform Jews.

As it stands, our state criminal justice system is not providing adequate justice or keeping Ohioans safe. It is overcrowded, often with low-level, non-violent offenders. Over the past three decades, tough-on-crime legislation, particularly for drug offenses, has created a system of over-criminalization and mass incarceration. Ohio's prisons, built to house 38,759 inmates, are overflowing with over 50,000 inmates. 28% of them are serving time for drug offenses.¹ The criminal justice system also displays deep and troublesome racial disparities. Black Ohioans are 5.6 times as likely to be incarcerated as white Ohioans.²

Sending low-level, non-violent offenders to prison is not the answer. Prison does not increase accountability. Prison does not increase safety. Prison drives families apart and often fails to help offenders rejoin society. While the challenge is great, there are important measures we can take to achieve a truly just criminal justice system in our state.

Judaism idealizes the value of rehabilitation, forgiveness and returning a sinner to the community. On Yom Kippur, our holiest day of the year, we each ask for repentance. We recognize that none of us is without sin. As Reform Jewish clergy, we support efforts to reform the criminal justice system so that it focuses on rehabilitation, rather than punishment, and offers individuals a real chance at living meaningfully and productively once released. Programs

that allow low-level offenders to remain a part of the community, albeit under probation or supervision, will improve public safety.

Reform Ohio supports a robust TCAP program that promotes public safety and justice for all Ohioans. TCAP will reallocate funds from imprisonment to local strategies such as probation, substance abuse treatment and other forms of supervision that will help offenders change their behavior without detaching them from their families, their jobs and their communities.

Supporting a robust TCAP program is a safe, moral and equitable choice for Ohio. As legislative leaders negotiate a final budget, we urge you to support common-sense reforms to our criminal justice system and keep the TCAP program at least as strong as it is in the Senate's budget bill (Sub. H.B. 49).

Sincerely,

Rabbi Jon Adland, Temple Israel, Canton

Rabbi Ari Ballaban, Temple Beth Or, Dayton

Rabbi Benjy Bar-Lev, Temple Beth Shalom, New Albany

Rabbi Robert B. Barr, Congregation Beth Adam, Loveland

Rabbi Josh Brown, Temple Israel, Akron

Rabbi Joshua L. Caruso, Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple, Beachwood

Rabbi Sigma Faye Coran, Rockdale Temple, Cincinnati

Rabbi Lindsey Danziger, Reform Ohio Lead Organizer, Cincinnati

Rabbi Michael Danziger, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati

Rabbi Noah Ferro, Cincinnati

Rabbi Dr. Joan S. Friedman, College of Wooster, Wooster

Rabbi Rosette Haim, The Temple – Tifereth Israel, Beachwood

Rabbi Meredith Kahan, Rockdale Temple, Cincinnati

Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati

Rabbi Rick Kellner, Congregation Beth Tikvah, Worthington

Rabbi Matthew Kraus, Cincinnati

Rabbi Enid C. Lader, Beth Israel – The West Temple, Cleveland

Rabbi Sharon Mars, Temple Israel, Columbus

Rabbi Melinda M. Mersack, Cleveland

Rabbi Margaret J. Meyer, Cincinnati

Rabbi Elana Perry, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati

Rabbi John Spitzer, Canton

Rabbi Edward J. Sukol, The Shul, Pepper Pike

Rabbi Miriam Terlinchamp, Temple Sholom, Cincinnati

Rabbi Karen Thomashow, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati

Rabbi Allison Bergman Vann, Suburban Temple – Kol Ami, Beachwood

Rabbi Lauren Werber, Temple B'nai Abraham, Elyria

Rabbi Irvin M. Wise, Cincinnati

Rabbi Misha Zinkow, Temple Israel, Columbus