

# FREE OHIO MOVEMENT

## **Demands of the Free Ohio Movement:**

**DEMAND:** Abolish force prison labor, i.e., prison slavery. Prisoners should have the right to refuse to work, to choose jobs, and to negotiate wages, without fear of punishment. Blatant economic exploitation of prisoners' labor is at the heart of mass incarceration and is reflected in their monthly salaries of \$16-\$24 per month.

**DEMAND:** Like all other Ohioans, prisoners should be given no less than Ohio state's minimum wage, \$8.25 an hour, for their labor.

**DEMAND:** All prisoners under the jurisdiction and control of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) should be afforded the same benefits and protections as traditional workers in Ohio, viz., disability or worker's compensation in the event of an injury, paid vacation or sick leave, adequate healthcare and medical benefits, overtime pay, Social Security withholdings, a retirement and pension plan, the opportunity to establish a union and to protest unfair wages, etc. Healthcare is not a privilege for a few workers but a right for everybody.

**DEMAND:** All working citizens in Ohio should have their minimum wages raised, in incremental phases, to \$15 an hour by September 9, 2020. Inasmuch as a living wage is a moral imperative, no Ohio citizen who works full time should live in poverty. Improving wages and working people's lives on the outside is interconnected with prisoners' struggle because such improvements will protect many people from either entering or re-entering the prison system.

**DEMAND:** All citizens confined in Ohio's prisons and jails should be allowed their right to vote. The Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution grants "the right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote." However, only Maine and Vermont are adhering to the Constitution by allowing their prisoners to vote. It is interesting to note that each Ohio city/county counts its

confined citizens in its census, but none of them are allowed to vote. This is hypocrisy, as well as economic and political exploitation, at its best. According to the Sentencing Project, an estimate 5.3 million U.S. citizens cannot vote because they have a criminal conviction and live in 1 of 48 states which disenfranchise felons and ex-felons. An estimate 4 million of these is already out of prison and are living and working in their communities.

**DEMAND:** The immediate release of all prisoners who were “sentenced for an offense or offenses that occurred when the prisoner was less than eighteen years of age” and they have served their minimum sentence(s) - at least fifteen years, or upon attaining forty years of age - as required by Ohio Revised Code 2967.132.

**DEMAND:** Releasing all old-law offenders who are eligible for parole and/or have completed over their minimum sentence. Since the Ohio Adult Parole Authority has repeatedly demonstrated bias toward racial minorities, and cannot be trusted to grant them a fair and impartial parole hearing, all old-law offenders should be released forthright. No more flimsy or fictitious excuses should be used to deny old-law offenders the opportunity to be home with their families, friends and loved ones. They have spent decades in prison and deserve to be free.

**DEMAND:** Banning life sentences for first-time offenders.

**DEMAND:** Ohio should limit the scope of a judge’s discretion on the issue of habitual offenders to be specific for the same type of crime being habitually offended.

**DEMAND:** Repealing capital punishment in Ohio. Several studies have shown that capital punishment in the United States is racist, too costly on taxpayers, and does not deter crime.

**DEMAND:** ODRC should institute a non-discriminatory conjugal-visit policy. If ODRC is serious about successfully enforcing PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) and reducing violence in its prisons, it should follow the lead of other states - California, Connecticut, New Mexico, New York and Washington - that permit conjugal visits. Not only would this implementation virtually eliminate most prison rapes and violence related to PREA, but also it would assist in maintaining the family and marital structure. After all, statistics show that numerous marital relationships have sadly ended due to spouses having extra martial affairs.

**DEMAND:** Ending long-term solitary confinement. It is torturous and its effects and consequences are devastating. There are prisoners who have been in solitary confinement for 5, 10, 15 and even over 20 years, notwithstanding not having violated any major rule infractions that would necessitate their continual isolation.

**DEMAND:** Ending mass incarceration by cutting Ohio's prison population to 37,000 by September 9, 2020. There are currently 50,742 people in Ohio prisons designed to hold 38,600.

**DEMAND:** Ending punitive punishment for those housed in Administrative Segregation (Local Control and Supermax). Ad-Seg was created for those who posed a serious threat to the general welfare and safety of staff, other prisoners and/or themselves, not for punishment. Thus, all prisoners in Ad-Seg should be granted full commissary privileges, the right to attend weekly religious services, the opportunity to order food and clothing packages from an approved vendor, etc. In short, they should be granted all privileges that do not jeopardize institutional security and safety.

**DEMAND:** All prisoners should be provided an opportunity to pursue higher education and/or a college degree. Higher education will assist them in getting jobs, in supporting their families, and in turning their lives around upon their release.

**DEMAND:** All prisoners should have the opportunity to have on-camera interviews with the media. The media and Ohio taxpayers have a right to know what is really going on in Ohio's prisons. If ODRC is doing nothing wrong, then it should have nothing to hide from the public.

**DEMAND:** ODRC should terminate its contract with Aramark, the privately owned Philadelphia-based company, due to the latter's inability to meet the terms of its contract. In particular, the food has on occasion been found to be inadequate nutritionally and unsanitary. Maggots, or fly larvae, have been found in prisoners' food; food has not been properly cooked; food portions have been half their prescribed sizes/amounts; too often food has an offensive odor; and the same leftover food is routinely being served two or three times per week. To add insult to injury, prisoners have been hauled off to disciplinary isolation for failing to carry out work assignments given to them by Aramark's employers. If Aramark wants prisoners to work for them, then they should compensate them with \$8.25 an hour for their labor.

**DEMAND:** Remove all mentally ill prisoners to a designated facility where they can secure proper mental health treatment. They should not be housed around sane prisoners.

**DEMAND:** Better medical care.

**DEMAND:** Reducing exorbitant commissary prices. Most prisoners only make \$9.00-\$16.00 per month. While commissary prices have been steadily increasing, prisoners' state pay has remained the same for the last 40 years or more.

**DEMAND:** Correctional officers should be both fired and criminally indicted for physical abusing and attacking prisoners who are in handcuffs and wearing leg shackles.

**DEMAND:** There should be no retaliation against prisoners, or their property, for becoming a member of the Free Ohio Movement.

Revised: October 2016