



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCSEA to DR&C: Pull plug on Aramark

Westerville – Today, OCSEA is again calling for the Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction to sever its ties with the private food contractor, Aramark, after yet another prison reported a maggot infestation. As of today, three prisons have found maggots in prison food and the union is receiving information daily about other infractions, including more maggots.

The Ohio Reformatory for Women and Trumbull Correctional Institution were the first prisons to report an issue with maggots contaminating food. Three separate incidents have been reported at ORW in beans, meat and in the food line, dating back to January of this year. TCI shut down a food line at the end of last week due to a maggot infestation, and now, Noble Correctional Institution is reporting maggots have gotten into inmate food.

“When is enough, enough?” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe. “These are not isolated incidents. Aramark has a pattern of not only poor food quality, but food shortages, low staffing levels and security breaches. It’s well past time to pull the plug on the Aramark contract,” said Mabe.

DR&C has said it will have every prison food operation inspected by a health department, but union leaders say that’s like putting a Band-aid on a head wound. “It’s not just the maggots in food or Aramark not following proper sanitation procedures in the kitchen. This has become an issue about the safety and security of the entire prison,” said Mabe. “No health inspector will be concerned about the problems created by short staffing, food quantity or increased contraband,” said Mabe. “But we are.”

Additionally, the Aramark failures are pointing to a larger problem when governments turn over tax dollars to for-profit companies. Aramark is notorious for skimping on meals, overcharging for commissary food and serving food of poor quality, all in the name of making a profit for their shareholders. But those actions have consequences. Ohio inmates have conducted sit-downs, lashed out at staff, protested and demonstrated in ways that create a dangerous environment for everyone.

In addition, Aramark workers are low paid and not properly trained. “That means they don’t remain long on the job, take little pride in their work and won’t stick their neck out when a dangerous situation arises,” said OCSEA Corrections Assembly President Jim Adkins. “They don’t learn proper procedures and aren’t mentored adequately to do a good job, all because those things cost the private provider more money.”

“Now add a maggot infestation to the issues of high staff turnover, poor training and poor food quality. That can be a deadly combination,” said Mabe.

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OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 state employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions, including 8,500 who work in the Ohio Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).