

Good morning,

My name is Don Hicks, I am a board member with the Correctional Officer's Union, Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 21. I would like to show my support today for the possible addition of funds to the Nevada Department of Corrections. It has been discussed that a portion of these funds may be utilized to implement a peer support program for Officers. I would like to stress that for Officers to properly assist offenders in the rehabilitation process they also need to be in a healthy mindset.

Correctional Officers are often required to work long shifts that can be extremely stressful. During these shifts, they must constantly remain alert and focused to keep a safe environment for the offenders, staff, and the public in general. The unfortunate effect of these long shifts can take a toll on the correctional workers over the years. High rates of suicide, alcoholism, divorce rates and hypervigilance plague this work environment. Post traumatic stress disorder is also a very real concern for many of these Officers. Some statistics gathered have shown that for as many as thirty four percent, they may suffer from this condition. For many this will have a lasting impact on their lives and the lives of their families.

Having an effective Officer Peer Support and Wellness program will give staff the support they desperately need. Officers have grown accustomed to "just dealing with it". However, ignoring this problem often leads to staff burn out, disciplinary issues, problems on the job and at home. Having access to a few tools for these staff to use when things get overwhelming will better serve our communities. It will go a long way towards hopefully improving the effectiveness of our corrections centers across the state and lead to better conditions for the offenders and staff. Ultimately, I believe this will make our Nevada communities safer as a result.

I request the IFC today consider the lasting positive impact of additional funds to the Nevada Department of Corrections.

Thank you,
Don Hicks
2nd Vice President
FOP, Lodge 21