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December 27, 2024

Governor Mike DeWine
Office of the Governor
Riffe Center
77 South High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

It is with extreme disappointment and sadness that I write to you today as Ross Correctional Institution (RCI) and all of Ohio mourn Correction Officer Andrew Lansing, who tragically lost his life at the hands of an inmate. Officer Lansing’s death is not only a tragedy but is also a reflection of the State of Ohio’s refusal to address broader issues of safe staffing and other unsafe conditions across State Systems.

State leadership must take accountability for their critical failures and begin to create meaningful change. We are requesting every leader involved in this horrific oversight at RCI, including Director Annette Chambers-Smith and the Warden of RCI, be placed on administrative leave pending a full, thorough and independent investigation of this incident.

Without major reform and attention to the ongoing staffing crisis the State of Ohio faces, you and the leaders you entrust to effectively run State agencies will continue to put every State Employee in jeopardy. In a statement issued by Director Chambers-Smith she referred to Officer Lansing’s death as “the ultimate sacrifice.” However, many are wondering if this is ultimately a case of the State choosing to sacrifice Lansing by not addressing the critical, ongoing issues ODRC Union Members have been stressing to leadership for years.

This is not the first tragedy ODRC has faced this year, as they experienced a fatal incident of negligence in April 2024. Had ODRC leaders taken accountability then, and made a more concerted effort to protect their employees, Lansing’s family may not be forced to spend their New Year mourning their loved one.

On behalf of every SEIU 1199 WV/KY/OH Member, we urge you to take accountability and act now to prevent further tragedy and prioritize the welfare of your workforce before it is, once again, too late.

Sincerely,
Becky Williams, President