



MCO EXECUTIVE BOARD MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS ABOUT THE STAFFING CRISIS:

Dear Members,

Over the past several months as this staffing crisis has continued to worsen, the number of calls, texts, and emails we have received from members and local leaders has drastically increased. You're all voicing the same concern that this crisis is still snowballing, and the working conditions are increasingly unsafe. The excessive overtime is physically exhausting many of you and severely disrupting your much-needed decompression time away from work. Your daily routines and time with family are being disrupted. Every day, on every shift at most prisons there are a high number of security positions that are supposed to be manned by officers that are left unmanned due to shortages. You are being required to continue to run the routine activities of the prison with far less officers than are supposed to be there. Instances of housing units with 240 prisoners that require 3 officers being staffed with 2 have become far too commonplace. Each day this persists, the tone of the conversations become more desperate and dejected, and it's not just officers voicing concerns. Prison wardens have described the daily struggle they have with running the prisons safely for all staff and prisoners with officer vacancy rates ranging from 10 percent to over 30 percent at some locations.

Even though the Department has stepped up recruitment efforts and academy numbers have been improving, it has not helped the overall problem. According to our records, from October 1, 2021, until July of 2022, we have lost over 200 more officers than we have gained when taking into account all retirements, resignations, transfers, and promotions. We've been working to address this perpetual staffing crisis issue since 2017 through contract negotiations, statewide informational pickets, public awareness campaigns, letters to the State Legislature, and to the Governor.

Earlier this year, our President and Vice President, Byron Osborn and Ray Sholtz, testified in the Senate Oversight Committee about the ongoing staffing crisis and the fact that any solution must focus on recruitment and retention. We stressed this point to every lawmaker that we spoke with, and were encour-

aged when the House introduced and passed a version of Corrections Budget that included provisions for recruitment and retention bonuses for corrections officers. However, as many of you noticed, those provisions were removed from the final version of the budget after negotiations between the House, Senate, and Governor concluded. In our opinion, it is a mistake that our state leadership decided to remove those items in favor of continuing the status quo of just running academies and hoping for the best. That hasn't worked for the past several years and won't work in the short or long-term.

We will continue to implore that the legislature, governor, and department work together to immediately address this staffing crisis, whether through supplemental legislation for recruitment and retention bonuses or temporary deployment of the Michigan National Guard to provide relief and security in the prisons. Every option needs to be explored; we cannot continue like this. For our part, we are willing to work with whoever it takes- the governor, the department, and both sides of the legislature to address this staffing crisis.

A number of members have expressed concerns about the effects the current working conditions are having on them and their fellow officers. We must look out for each other, if you are struggling or notice someone else struggling, please to do not hesitate to speak up. Sometimes just talking it out with someone you know can help. You can also reach out to the wellness unit at **517-335-0570**, or utilize the new Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by simply dialing **988**. Our job is stressful enough without a staffing crisis, so now more than ever we need to take care of ourselves.

We are sending this letter to tell all of you that we hear you loud and clear, we know what the conditions are and how they are affecting you and your families. Through these next steps we will be engaging you and asking for your help as we continue to testify in front of legislative committees, push the state legislature to introduce and pass bills that help us address this crisis, and hold press events to garner more media coverage about the difficulties

we're facing. We will hold our state leadership accountable and continue to put our situation in the public spotlight.

In Solidarity,



Byron Osborn
MCO President



Ray Sholtz
MCO Vice President



Ed Clements
MCO Treasurer



Cary Johnson
MCO Recording Secretary



Dave Pasche
MCO Trustee



Mark Dunn
MCO Trustee



Marcus D. Collins
MCO Trustee



Tim Fleury
MCO Trustee



Georgiann Stan
MCO Trustee