MR. WILKINSON:  Thank you Chairman Walton and members of the commission. I'll warn you. I have edited my comments just a little bit because of discussion that took place this morning. I don't want to really be repetitive. But to just remind you, I am the director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. I'm also the chairperson of the advisory board for the National Institute of Corrections and past president of both the American Correctional Association and the Association of State Correctional Administrators. So like the previous witnesses, I appreciate the opportunity to be here and provide testimony to you all about the subject at hand regarding hiring, training, retention to qualified staff.

But first I would like to tell you a little bit about our agency, but even before that I'll be honest with you and remind a few of you that, you know, prior to the law being past, I was one of the toughest critics of even the commission or even the law being passed. I've even written letters to my
U.S. Senator and letters to newspapers in our state because I thought given the numbers and the discussion about the prevalence of rape was absolutely unfair and untrue, especially in our state, but nevertheless, once the law was passed, like every our jurisdiction in our country, we decided to conform to and abide by the tenants of the Prison Rape Elimination Act. And because of our decision to go ahead and do what's right, I think we have done a considerable amount in terms of making sure that we have a system in place that absolutely minimizes the possibility of sexual assault inside our correctional facilities in the jurisdiction of Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections houses over 45,000 felony offenders in 32 correctional facilities. Our adult parole authorities supervises another 35,000 persons in the community.

I would first like to talk about some of our department's initiatives regarding the management
of sexual assaults in our prisons. Sexual
assaults, as has been testified earlier, do happen
in the state of Ohio as they do in other
jurisdictions. However, just like you've heard
this morning from several people, we have a zero
tolerance for any type of sexual assault of
prisoners in our state either by staff or other
inmates.

To this end, in March of 2004, we initiated
Institution Sexual Assault Abatement ten-point
plan. A few of you may be familiar with our
ten-point plan, which details the department's
efforts to prevent sexual assault of inmates in
Ohio's correctional institutions.

I'll tell you a little bit about the ten-point
plan. If you want to know each the ten points, I
can tell you that as well. But I'm just, maybe,
talk a little bit about that plan in paragraph
format.

The ten-point plan includes the establishment
of a security review committee that conducted
reviews of each prison's physical plant, sexual assault allegations, key assignments, camera locations, employee and inmate schedules and floor plans. A toll free sexual assault hotline was developed so that inmates can report abuse confidentially. All prisoners have reception, and upon assignment to their parent institution are provided information about prevention, self-protection and how to report sexual assaults, treatment and counseling.

We established an inmate victim support person that provides assistance to an inmate victim during the investigation phase and referral for any mental health treatment that may be necessary. In addition, I convened an oversight committee to continually evaluate and monitor the plans, provisions, and seek new methods of combating inmates' sexual abuse, as well as insuring Ohio's compliance with all of the aspects of PREA.

In September 2004 DRC, like other states, was awarded a Safeguarding Communities Grant to comply even further with the PREA legislation in order to
provide us with a greater capacity to respond to allegations of sexual assaults and track the outcome of such indications. Some of this funding is to be used to purchase an information management system to enable institution investigators to link sexual assault case information across institutions. A DRC will purchase additional investigative tools to aid in determining the credibility of sexual assault allegations and surveillance equipment in order to better identify, locate and track offenders in a more defined area of the institution. Since January of 2003, we have investigated 285 allegations of inmate on inmate sexual assaults within our prison system.

Now, a little bit about correctional staffing. We currently have a work force of over 14,000 persons. Correctional officers comprise about half that total. You've heard already some statistics about annual salaries for correction officers. We're probably somewhere in the middle of Louisiana and Massachusetts, who pays considerably more than what we do in the state of Ohio.
We've also had, in Ohio state, a highway
patrol investigator assigned to each prison to
conduct criminal investigations. The institutional
investigators on the highway perform their work
cooperratively on matters that constitute both a
violation of our standards of employee conduct and
criminal statutes such as sexual conduct between an
employee and an inmate.

In 2003 the department was successful in
adding language to the Ohio criminal code to make
sexual assault by an employee with an inmate a
sexual battery offense that carries a mandatory
prison time.

So, we are fully challenged to make sure that
our staff are well aware of the consequences of
being involved improperly with prisoners within
their custody.

Just like you've heard this morning, staff
training is as critical of a function as one can do
in a training institution and not just for sexual
assault purposes. Our agency has training of new
employees, training which includes orientation,
which includes preservice training, which includes on the job training, and there is a full regimen of inservice training that happens for employees in our agency as well. So, we are very dedicated to making sure we have a training curricula that allows us to touch all the important areas that especially relate in this case to improper behavior, any unusual behavior, or any consequences of behavior that is either illegal in our state or against our employee standards of conduct.

Each of our institutional investigators receive training on techniques and investigation of sexual crimes. Most recently the sexual assault training and investigation center from the state of Washington provided additional investigation training on sexual assault to our staff, to staff of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, staff of the Ohio Department of Youth Services and many local law enforcement officials.

Another valuable tool made available to our investigators is the use of something called CVSA, computerized voice stress analysis. The CVSA
examination is used as an informal aid in conjunction with traditional techniques of administrative investigation within our facility. Although used only as an investigative tool, the CVSA has aided significantly in the investigation of both the employee and offender sexual misconduct. There are currently eight certified CVSA examiners within our agency.

We recognize the importance to show staff not only the need to maintain and enhance career opportunities, but also to balance their personal and family responsibilities. Our Bureau of Employee Relations is responsible for recruiting, developing, and retaining our employees. And in order to accomplish these goals, this office oversees employee tuition reimbursement, work force development initiatives, women staff coordinated programs, stress management, and something called the Professional Alliance of Correctional Employees, which is kind of an internal association of employees who mentor each other and do a number of things that we think help an employee learn more
about areas that maybe he or she were not specifically hired to perform.

But, I do want to touch on a couple of things before I turn the microphone over. Corrections systems don't operate in vacuum. We are an entity within the so-called justice system. You will seldom hear me talk about a criminal justice system. If we're going to be successful, it's going to be because we have a social justice systems that works, which means that we have to depend on entities outside the arena and the boundaries of a correctional system in order for us to be effective. So it's a societal problem, and it's not just one that is attached to correctional institutions, especially the topic that we're talking about today. We have to talk about it. If we're going to talk about, you know, Prison Rape Elimination Act and the consequences thereof, we have to talk about things like communicable diseases, we have to talk about issues that will be important to that person once he or she leaves the confines of our walls and fences around the
country.

I can't stress enough how important it is to talk about culture. Now we can talk about misconduct on behalf of an employee who engages in improper behavior with an inmate, but if we don't stress making sure that the culture and the climate of our correctional facilities are ones that are not conducive for a sexual assault to take place in the first place, then we're missing the boat. Instead of teaching the person to fish, we're giving them the fish. But we need to make sure that we have a holistic, a systemic approach to addressing this issue a not just tackling and putting Band-Aids on particular problems.

And I would stress that in a preamble to your work and your document that you'll ultimately publish that you will say that it's a more wholistic approach that we need to have instead of one that is concentrated on a few staff.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I will end my comments formally.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Director. Ms.
Frasier.