



**Statement of Andy Potter  
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**Before the Joint Subcommittee on  
Crime and Federal Government Surveillance & Subcommittee on Oversight  
of the House Judiciary Committee**

**Committee Hearing on “Federal Corrections in Focus: Oversight of the Bureau of Prisons”**

**May 6, 2025**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Members, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Andy Potter, and I serve as the Founder and Executive Director of One Voice United, a national organization committed to lifting up the voices and expertise of corrections professionals and ensuring they are part of the national conversations shaping the future of corrections.

Before founding One Voice United, I spent nearly 30 years working inside a correctional facility as an officer and later as a labor leader in Michigan. Those experiences, combined with years of traveling the country and listening to thousands of correctional officers and staff, have given me a deep appreciation for the work they do, and a clear view of the systemic challenges that continue to impact corrections at every level

I also want to take a moment to recognize that this week marks forty-one years since the first National Corrections Officers Week was proclaimed — a time set aside each May to honor the service, sacrifices, and vital contributions of those who work behind the walls to keep our communities safe.

Today, corrections as a profession is at a crossroads. From county jails to the Bureau of Prisons, and every state system in between, we are seeing an unprecedented convergence of issues that threaten not just staffing levels, but the overall mission and health of our corrections systems. Chronic understaffing has forced employees to work exhausting amounts of overtime, often leading to burnout, safety risks, and declining morale. New recruits have become increasingly difficult to attract and even harder to retain, with many agencies losing a staggering number of good people within the first 18 months of service. In fact, a [2024 survey](#) conducted by the

American Correctional Association Research Council, revealed that security officer vacancy rates reached a high of 55% and turnover rates among active staff were as high as 48%. It's a problem that touches every corner of our country and every layer of our system.

At the same time, the physical infrastructure inside many facilities continues to deteriorate, and the employees and those incarcerated, are asked to live and work in facilities that are not equipped for the demands of today's correctional environment, and are simply not conducive to safety and rehabilitation. When the conditions in which people work deteriorates, such as they have, it sends a damaging message about the value we place on their safety and well-being.

Compounding these issues is a deeper, more difficult challenge, the erosion of job satisfaction and connection to a larger purpose. Increasingly, staff report that they feel isolated and disconnected from the mission of rehabilitation and public service that once brought them into the field. They feel like expendable cogs in a machine rather than partners in a shared effort to keep our communities safe and offer second chances. The result is a workforce that is overburdened physically, stretched to its breaking point mentally, and demoralized emotionally.

Correctional officers face the [highest rates of PTSD, suicide, divorce, and substance abuse of any public safety profession](#). These are people working every day in high-stress, high-risk environments, exposed to trauma and danger, yet often without meaningful wellness support or recognition of the issues they face.

However, despite the seriousness of these challenges, I believe this is also a moment of tremendous opportunity. Across the country, there is growing recognition that real, meaningful change is both necessary and possible. We have the chance right now, through leadership, collaboration, and honest engagement to chart a better path forward for the corrections profession and the broader system it serves.

A critical part of that effort must be investing in 21<sup>st</sup> Century training and comprehensive employee wellness programs that are designed with the direct input of employees themselves. True wellness initiatives can no longer be an afterthought or a box to check. They must be integrated into the culture of every department and facility, with consistent funding, evaluation, and leadership commitment.

Equally important is restoring meaning and pride in corrections work. When employees are treated as stakeholders, when their expertise is valued and their voices are heard in shaping policy, it builds a sense of agency and purpose that cannot be replicated otherwise. Front-line employees know better than anyone what's working and what isn't, and engaging them early and often will be critical to achieving any sustainable reform and culture change

Stakeholder engagement isn't just a good management practice, it can be the difference between success and failure. When the people asked to carry out a system's mission feel respected,

included, and invested in, they become partners in its success. Without that buy-in, even the best-intentioned reforms and culture change will struggle to take hold.

We believe in the power of collaboration between employees and those who might represent them, administrators, legislators, advocates, and communities to drive lasting change. No single department, union, or organization can solve these challenges alone. It will take a shared commitment, fueled by respect, transparency, and a willingness to listen to the people doing the job every day.

This is a pivotal time, but it is also a hopeful one. If we are willing to truly engage with one another and lift up the real-world experiences of those who know this work best, One Voice United stands ready to assist however we can. I am confident we can build a corrections system that is safer, stronger, and more effective for everyone it touches — corrections professionals, incarcerated individuals, families, and the communities we all serve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to any questions you may have.