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COLUMBUS – When Governor John Kasich signed his $55.8 billion budget into law last year, it was an epic legislative triumph for him in one major way. It effectively introduced Ohio to a new era of privately run state prisons, a policy he rabidly pushed.

Democrats fought to derail the governor’s privatization agenda but that effort was largely futile.

Yet, State Representative Robert Hagan, who has led that fight, continues to make the case against that policy, recently citing a report he said clearly demonstrates that privatization of

state prisons just doesn’t work.

It is the case of Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), a private entity charged with running the Lake Erie Correctional Institution.

A recent audit by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ORDC) into how that arrangement is playing out uncovered a potpourri of problems, said Hagan, who also noted that CCA “was only in compliance with 66.7 percent of Ohio correctional standards.”

And that was just the beginning of the problem.

According to the audit report, there were many issues concerning “staffing shortages, outdated and improperly secured nonlethal munitions,” said Hagan.

The Youngstown lawmaker said that the report also cited numerous instances of “fire hazards” playing out in a chaotic operation where workers were confused and unsure of the policies and procedures they were required to follow, in light of them being employees of CCA while at the same time following guidelines set by ORDC.

Hagan saw this mess coming.

“As the recent report highlights, prison privatization just does not work, he said. “Instead of focusing on prisoner rehabilitation or safe and secure incarceration, private prisons end up cutting corners in order to benefit the bottom line.”

Knowing that privatization was going to be a cardinal policy of Kasich’s economic agenda, Hagan and his colleague Representative Ron Gerberry geared up for a pushback, which included introducing a bill in May to remove the prison privatization proposal from the $55.8 billion biannual budget that Kasich eventually signed into law.

Governor Kasich, whose legislative minions helped push his conservative agenda through the legislature, spent a lot of time promoting his privatization plan, which included the Ohio turnpike.

All told, Hagan isn’t at all convinced that a company after “increased profit” is going to run Ohio prisons effectively.

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