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**TESTIMONY 2013**

**H.B. 2652**

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present testimony in favor of H.B. 2652, which will facilitate the provision of meaningful, immediate information to people leaving incarceration, thus supplementing the efforts of existing Reentry Coordinators. This will have long-term public safety advantages with little cost.

### **INFORMATION ABOUT COUNTY-SPECIFIC SERVICES WILL PROVIDE EXITING INDIVIDUALS WITH TOOLS FOR SUCCESS**

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has 64 Reentry Coordinators to provide assistance to the more than 75,000 incarcerated individuals who leave prison each year.<sup>1</sup> Given Texas' large returning population, it is difficult, if not impossible, for these reentry professionals to provide meaningful services and information to most returning individuals, many of whom are in desperate need of housing assistance, employment opportunities, and contact information for agencies that will provide medical and mental health care.

**Yet many Texas organizations – private, non-profit, local, and faith-based – have compiled locale-specific resource lists that could be made available to incarcerated individuals preparing for their return to society.** Access to this information would greatly help incarcerated individuals formulate reentry plans based on available community providers, and it would increase the chances that these individuals will successfully reintegrate into their community and become productive, law-abiding citizens.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Texas statute mandates that TDCJ develop a comprehensive reentry plan that includes, “programs that address the assessed needs of offenders; a comprehensive network of transition programs; the identification or providers of existing local programs and transitional services; and other providers of services as necessary to adequately assess and address the needs of each offender.”<sup>2</sup> **Providing exiting inmates with already-compiled information about available community-based service providers and other relevant organizations will assist TDCJ in this effort at very low or no cost.**
- Research suggests that the most critical period for someone leaving prison is the period **immediately following release.**<sup>3</sup>

### **COST-SAVING AND PUBLIC SAFETY-DRIVEN SOLUTION: SUPPORT H.B. 2652 BY REPRESENTATIVE ALLEN**

- **H.B. 2652 will ensure that incarcerated individuals have critical information that will prepare them for successful return to their communities.** This bill stipulates that TDCJ contact organizations that have compiled comprehensive, locale-specific resource lists containing basic, easily accessible, and accurate contact information, and make that information available to all incarcerated individuals. This will assist men and women as they prepare for the critical post-release period.
- **Under H.B. 2652, TDCJ will provide a community-specific resource list to every incarcerated individual who is within six months of release, enabling these individuals to readily access information in the event they must change their plans.** Reentry is not a static process; plans often must be changed in light of housing or job opportunities. With these personal resource packets, exiting individuals will be better prepared to deal with the transitory nature of reentry, and will be equipped with the tools they need to make a successful transition.

*Citations on reverse.*

## Citations

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Fiscal Year 2012 Statistical Report*, 2013, p. 3; total releases in FY 2012 equaled 77,316; [www.tdcj.state.tx.us/documents/Statistical\\_Report\\_FY2012.pdf](http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2012.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> TEX. GOV. CODE § 501.092(b)(2)-(5)

<sup>3</sup> Council of State Governments. Reentry Policy Council. *Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council: Charting the Safe and Successful Return of Prisoners to the Community*, New York: Council of State Governments, January 2005; <http://www.reentrypolicy.org/Report/About>.