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Justice Advocacy Group Releases Open Letter: “Texas Cannot Afford to Wait for Justice”

*Texas Criminal Justice Coalition Urges Legislators to Include Justice Reform Priorities
in 2021 Legislative Session*

AUSTIN, TX — This week, the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) released an [open letter](#) urging Texas leaders, legislators, and staff to prioritize justice reform during the state’s 2021 legislative session. With Texas facing an anticipated budget shortfall of \$4.6 billion by the end of fiscal year 2021, TCJC emphasized the urgency of this moment as an opportunity for a top-down realignment in how our state’s money is spent, and the need for real public health and safety infrastructures.

“Taxpayer spending on criminal justice has escalated as social institutions and community-needed resources have been dramatically reduced by both state and local governments,” the letter reads, referencing Texas’ now \$4 billion annual corrections budget. “Divestments from community services have typically correlated with increased expenditures on policing and incarceration, which entangle hundreds of thousands of Texans each year and devastate communities of color.”

TCJC also emphasized the historic and systemic failings of policing and corrections, which led to a boiling point earlier this year as thousands of Texans joined others throughout the country in protesting inherent injustices.

“Alarming, policing, arrests, and criminal punishments have become the default response to people with mental illness and substance use disorder, people experiencing poverty and homelessness, students struggling with social-emotional issues, and people facing a host of other hurdles. Instead of addressing the underlying causes of criminality that have allowed mass incarceration to run rampant, cities and counties continue to rely heavily on the reactive—and costly—responses of policing and incarceration, cutting short people’s opportunities to find stability, support their families, continue their education, or join the workforce.”

After conducting extensive research on how the Texas justice system can be transformed to save money and lives at every point of contact, TCJC has compiled a communities-first guide for leadership, which will be released in November 2020.

The letter, which was mailed to the office of every state-level Texas Senator and Representative, is available on the TCJC website [here](#).

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The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) advances solutions and builds coalitions to end mass incarceration and build safer Texas communities. To learn more about TCJC, visit www.TexasCJC.org.