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TESTIMONY 2015

CSSB 578

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present testimony in favor of CSSB 578, which will ensure that incarcerated individuals are provided with accurate reentry resource information prior to release. This will connect individuals with employment, housing, health, education, veteran, and mental health services that will help them successfully reintegrate back into the community.

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

- **The transition from prison back to the community is unexpectedly difficult for most people leaving prison. They leave with \$100, the clothes on their back, a 10-day supply of medication, and a bus ticket home.**¹
- Formerly incarcerated individuals are more likely to successfully transition from prison to the community when they have a solid plan prior to release.
- Many private, non-profit, and faith-based organizations have already compiled locale-specific resource lists that could be made available to incarcerated individuals preparing for their return to society. Moreover, Reentry Case Managers have their own database of resources. **Expanding incarcerated individuals' access to this information would greatly help them formulate successful reentry plans.**
- There are only 1,880 state-run halfway house beds available to the nearly 75,000 people released each year.² **Access to accurate and up-to date information about privately run halfway houses reduces the number of people who need limited state resources.** It also speeds release for paroled individuals who remain in state custody awaiting halfway house beds, ultimately **saving the state money.**

KEY FINDINGS

- Texas statute mandates that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) develop a comprehensive reentry plan that includes "programs that address the assessed needs of offenders..."³ **Providing exiting inmates with already-compiled information about available community-based service providers and other relevant organizations will assist TDCJ in this effort.**
- Recently released individuals who experience difficulty accessing clothing, food, shelter, medical care, or transportation are at **exceptionally high risk of returning to crime** as a means to provide for basic needs.⁴

COST-SAVING AND PUBLIC SAFETY-DRIVEN SOLUTION: SUPPORT CSSB 578 BY SENATORS HINOJOSA AND RODRÍGUEZ

- **CSSB 578 will provide critical information to incarcerated individuals, preparing them for a successful return to their communities.** This bill stipulates that TDCJ compile comprehensive, locale-specific resource lists containing basic, easily accessible, and accurate contact information, and make that information available to all incarcerated individuals prior to release.
- **CSSB 578 will provide incarcerated individuals who are within six months of release with their own community-specific resource list,** enabling them to readily access information in the event they must change their plans.

¹ Texas Department of Criminal Justice Parole Division, *Policy and Operating Procedure #PD/POP-3.1.2: Release Payment ("Gate Money")*, December 6, 2012, https://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/documents/parole/03.01.02_parole_policy.pdf.

² Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017*, August 25, 2014, 175, <http://docs.lbb.state.tx.us/display.aspx?DocType=LAR&Year=201>.

³ TEX. GOV. CODE § 501.092(b)(2)-(5)

⁴ Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, *Release Planning for Successful Reentry: A Guide for Corrections, Service Providers, and Community Groups*, Research Report, September, 2008, 6-23, http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411767_successful_reentry.pdf.