



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**SUBMITTED BY ANA YAÑEZ-CORREA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TEXAS CRIMINAL JUSTICE COALITION**

REGARDING HOUSE BILL 424

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

FEBRUARY 28, 2007

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Ana Yáñez-Correa. I am the Executive Director of the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present testimony regarding House Bill 424 by House Corrections Chairman Jerry Madden, a bill which provides grants to state and private agencies that implement Nurse-Family Partnership programs in at-risk communities.

Providing first-time, low-income mothers with the resources they need to give birth to and raise healthy children is a critical preventive step against crime. Outcome evaluations of the Nurse-Family Partnership have shown consistent reductions in arrest rates of mothers and children who participate in the program, as well as effects in other areas – including parental participation and employment – that reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior.

As the leaders for criminal justice in Texas, I commend the members of this committee for viewing criminal justice policy as a holistic set of community, treatment, and family initiatives instead of only courts and prisons. H.B. 424 and similar bills can address affected communities better than incarceration and other offender-centered policies alone.

THE NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM HAS BEEN PROVEN TO POSITIVELY AFFECT PARTICIPATING FAMILIES AND REDUCE THEIR PROPENSITY FOR CRIME.

The Nurse-Family Partnership found that program participation resulted in significant reductions in criminal behavior for both mother and child, as measured by several outcome studies:

- Participating mothers had 61% fewer arrests, 72% fewer convictions, and 98% fewer days in jail.
- Participating children were 48% less likely to be abused or neglected, 59% less likely to be arrested, and 90% less likely to be adjudicated as persons in need of supervision for incorrigible behavior.

The studies also found several positive health- and family-related effects of the program:

- Improvements in women's prenatal health (including reductions in prenatal cigarette smoking and reductions in prenatal hypertensive disorders);
- Reductions in children's healthcare encounters for injuries;
- Fewer unintended subsequent pregnancies, and increases in intervals between first and second births;
- Increases in father involvement and women's employment;
- Reductions in families' use of welfare and food stamps; and
- Increases in children's school readiness (including improvements in language, cognition, and behavioral regulation).*

By allowing state and private entities to utilize funds to implement this commendable program, we can nip crime in the bud by providing care and assistance to those who are most at-risk. Passing H.B. 424 into law can reduce the front-end demand on criminal justice agencies by transforming at-risk families into stable, healthy, and productive ones.

* Data was taken from Nurse Family Partnership summaries available online at www.nursefamilypartnership.org/content/index.cfm?fuseaction=showContent&contentID=4&navID=4