

2012 LEGISLATIVE INTERIM CHARGES RELATING TO CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

*For Possible Consideration By the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
For Further Research*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

- Assess the current infrastructure and funding mechanisms for mental health services in both rural and urban areas throughout the state. Study innovative local programs that could be expanded, as well as successful delivery and financial models in other states. Make recommendations to expand access and improve services through increased efficiency, competition, and transparency.
- Monitor the administration of the Correctional Managed Health Care system. Examine the implementation of reforms passed during the 82nd Legislative Session, including the contracts between the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and participating entities under Rider 55 to ensure the expenses incurred match the appropriated amounts.
- Monitor the Texas Department of Public Safety's implementation of the driver's license improvement plan and the use of the funds appropriated to the department for such purposes by the 82nd Legislature. Evaluate the feasibility of privatization with the intent to minimize wait times for Texans. *(Joint with the House Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety)*
- Review and make recommendations for improving the level of funding of the Crime Victims Compensation Fund. *(Joint with the House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence)*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

- Monitor the implementation of S.B. 653 (82R), which created the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Make any recommendations needed to enhance the integration of the Texas Youth Commission and the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission.
- Study ways to reduce the number of youth referred to the juvenile justice system. Consider the availability of mental health services, diversion and early intervention programs, and other prevention methods.
- Study and make recommendations about issues related to the certification of juveniles as adults.
- Review current parole supervision strategies to ensure that resources are being used efficiently to maximize the state's need for public safety and rehabilitation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COUNTY AFFAIRS

- Conduct a general study of issues facing county jails. The study should include innovative ways to address overcrowding, the impact homelessness has on the county jail population, and recommendations for handling inmates undergoing detoxification and withdrawal from drugs and alcohol.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE

- Review and make recommendations for improving the level of funding for the Crime Victims Compensation Fund. *(Joint with the House Committee on Appropriations)*
- Review the current sentencing practices for defendants with mental illnesses and make recommendations. Study practices in other states. Compare recent incarceration trends between those who have mental illnesses and those who do not.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY & PUBLIC SAFETY

- Monitor the Texas Department of Public Safety's implementation of the driver's license improvement plan and the use of the funds appropriated to the department for such purposes by the 82nd Legislature. Evaluate the feasibility of privatization with the intent to minimize wait times for Texans. *(Joint with the House Committee on Appropriations)*
- Examine the role of law enforcement personnel assigned to school district campuses and postsecondary education campuses and determine whether any changes to laws concerning the enforcement of safety and discipline are necessary. Determine whether additional training of law enforcement personnel assigned to school district and secondary education campuses is necessary.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

- Identify policies to alleviate food insecurity, increase access to healthy foods, and incent good nutrition within existing food assistance programs. Consider initiatives in Texas and other states to eliminate food deserts and grocery gaps, encourage urban agriculture and farmers' markets, and increase participation in the Summer Food Program. Evaluate the desirability and feasibility of incorporating nutritional standards in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Monitor congressional activity on the 2012 Farm Bill and consider its impact on Texas. *(Joint with the House Committee on Public Health)*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LICENSING & ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

- Study the feasibility of streamlining the process to obtain an occupational license. Consider consolidating all occupational licenses under one state agency and whether such a move would increase efficiency and effectiveness. Analyze the process being used in other states.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

- Review and make recommendations on the effectiveness of Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEPs) in reducing students' involvement in further disciplinary infractions. Determine the appropriate role of disciplinary alternative placements in promoting education achievement and how technology could be used to supplement education services. Consider appropriate placements in DAEPs or JJAEPs and consistent funding models for those programs. Consider options for counties without a JJAEP or inefficiently few placements in a JJAEP. Identify positive behavioral models that promote a learning environment for teachers to appropriately instruct while addressing any behavioral issues and enforcing student discipline.
- Review methods and best practices in Texas and other states to encourage more parental and community involvement in the education of Texas children.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

- Identify policies to alleviate food insecurity, increase access to healthy foods, and incent good nutrition within existing food assistance programs. Consider initiatives in Texas and other states to eliminate food deserts and grocery gaps, encourage urban agriculture and farmers' markets, and increase participation in the Summer Food Program. Evaluate the desirability and feasibility of incorporating nutritional standards in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Monitor congressional activity on the 2012 Farm Bill and consider its impact on Texas. *(Joint with the House Committee on Human Services)*

SENATE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- Study and evaluate the long-term stability of the Crime Victims Compensation Fund (CVC) including: the original statutory purpose of the fund; the definition of "crime victim"; the current funding streams; the current ability to pay claims; and impact of the fund on victim organizations supported by the fund. Make recommendations to increase collection rates for effective and efficient use of the fund and resources.
- Study the law governing the Texas bail bond industry and determine local practices for the pretrial release of the accused. Determine the financial impact of various pretrial release options for the accused, and the financial impact on counties for the failure to release pretrial.
- Evaluate existing comprehensive diversion and treatment systems within the state, including mental health treatment, to determine cost effectiveness, reductions in correctional populations, impact on healthcare systems, and the overall number of people treated effectively. Examine federal, state and local collaborations and make recommendations for best practices to maximize effective use of funding and resources.

- Study the use of administrative segregation in TDCJ, including issues related to: the frequency and justification of its use; the process and classification system which determines an inmate's placement; the impact on prisoners' mental health and recidivism rates; the process of reviewing placement and inmates' transition into both the general prison population and the general public; options for alternative confinement arrangements; and the potential for the expansion of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) or similar programming in order to improve inmates' transition from solitary confinement to the general public.
- Assess the current trends in prescription drug abuse including crimes and arrests, abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medication in the prison population, impact on probation violations and recidivism, and incidences of law enforcement as the first responders to prescription drug overdose emergencies. Identify strategies for law enforcement and criminal justice systems to work with education and health care professionals to use all means, including technology, to identify abuses, and increase education and prevention. Make recommendations to enhance drug abuse prevention and intervention programs.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of school discipline practices. Specifically, review and make recommendations on:
 - » The effectiveness of Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEP) in reducing students' involvement in further disciplinary infractions and in promoting positive educational achievement;
 - » Disproportionate school discipline referrals, including suspension, expulsion and Class C misdemeanor citations;
 - » The issue of "Zero Tolerance" in secondary education school discipline, their use of alternative education campuses, and the barriers they create toward graduation. Also include the role that specialized school police departments play in these systems. Consider the impact on the juvenile justice system and the adult prison system;
 - » The number of students in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) referred to juvenile or municipal courts, suspended, expelled, and placed in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP). Examine data-sharing practices between DFPS, TEA, and local education agencies and make recommendations to increase communication between schools and DFPS to increase educational outcomes for children in foster care;
 - » Evidence-based models used for addressing juvenile delinquency prevention that are targeted to non-adjudicated, but at-risk youth, in the school disciplinary system. (Joint with Senate Committee Education Committee)
- Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, 82nd Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following:

- » Implementation of and transition to the new Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Examine the consolidation of the probation and parole functions, and make recommendations to enhance the integration of the two agencies and promote successful outcomes for youths, victims, and taxpayers; and
- » Overall care of female inmates.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERAN AFFAIRS AND MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

- Study the employment rate of Texas veterans, and consider ways to better coordinate federal, state, local and private resources to enhance employment services. Examine the transfer of Veteran Employment Services (VES) from the Texas Workforce Commission to the Texas Veterans Commission, and include an assessment of the impact on Texas veterans and their families. Make recommendations for improving services and possible expansion of services to potential additional returning veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.
- Evaluate the status of mental health services for veterans and Texas Military Forces. Include an assessment of peer counseling programs, “aftercare” provided for units within their local communities following a trauma within the group, and efforts to address the secondary mental health and substance abuse issues caused by post traumatic stress disorders and other combat-related disorders.
- Study the use and impact of Veterans Courts throughout Texas. Make recommendations relating to potential funding sources, staffing requirements, additional direct services not provided by the Veterans Administration, and possible expansion.