



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

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

**REGARDING APPROPRIATIONS BILL ARTICLE V  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**FEBRUARY 24, 2009**

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 the opportunity to present testimony regarding Article V of the Appropriations Bill. In addition to the testimony below, I have attached a resource list which includes the contact information of criminal justice practitioners that will be helpful to you, as well as a copy of our 2009 policy guide.

The task before you is great, but I am confident that each and every one of you will do what is best to meet Texas' public safety needs in a responsible and mindful way. Especially with the state expecting to spend billions of dollars per year over the next two years on the mere incarceration of felons, you as Committee members must strongly consider the allocation of funds towards public safety strategies that will yield greater returns on initial investments.

As you know, in 2007, the Texas Legislature had to choose whether to spend money on the maintenance and staffing of three additional prisons or invest in strategies that would eliminate the need for costly prison construction. Through the leadership and hard work of members on the House Corrections Committee, Senate Criminal Justice Committee, and Appropriations Committee, Texas chose to invest in diversions – including funding for drug and alcohol treatment programs and systems to return people to their communities in a healthy and productive way (including increased funding for halfway houses, additional out-patient drug treatment programs, and flexibility for judges and supervision staff).

Texas cannot afford to undo the strides made during the 80<sup>th</sup> legislative session, especially in light of current economic realities. To build upon this groundwork, policy-makers must continue their commitment to ensuring the fidelity and success of responsible crime-reduction best practices.

**For this reason, we strongly urge you to support the following appropriations solutions:**

**(1) Support TDCJ's Legislative Appropriations Request.** Practices throughout TDCJ must be strengthened and monitored to increase efficiency. According to a CJAD handout made available yesterday (titled *Strengthening Community Supervision*), TDCJ made a Legislative Appropriations Exceptional Items Request for the FY 2010-2011 biennium that includes the following:

- \$11.9 million due to an increase in projected probation growth (included in the initial versions of the appropriations bill);
- \$40 million in additional Basic Supervision funding;
- \$10 million in additional Diversion funding for Community Corrections Facilities; and
- \$10 million in additional Diversion funding for Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment.

**(2) Maintain the diversions passed in 2007 that are currently saving the state millions of dollars and eliminating the need for costly prison construction.** Considering the state's anticipated budget shortfall for 2010-11, the Legislature cannot waste taxpayers' dollars on the status quo by locking up individuals and throwing away the key. Instead, during this 81<sup>st</sup> Legislative Session the goal of policy-makers from the both sides of the aisle must be to continue to support the cost-effective "smart on crime" practices put in place during our last state session in 2007 (and discussed above). These public safety strategies have laid the

foundation for an infrastructure focused on saving taxpayers money, increasing public safety, and boosting the strength of our communities.

**(3) Fund Specialty Courts.** Despite specialty courts' significant recidivism-reduction and cost-saving benefits – as well as the 2007 legislative mandate (via H.B. 530) requiring their implementation in counties with populations over 200,000 – these courts still lack funding in many counties to realize their full potential. Specialty courts should be fully funded and institutionalized so that Texas can more effectively address addiction and mental health issues.

**(4) Maintain funding for TDCJ's Community Justice Assistance Division (CJAD).** CJAD should be given the resources necessary to effectively oversee funds allocated to CSCDs, and the programs on which those funds are spent. Specifically, CJAD should be given additional staff to do the following:

- Ensure that funds distributed to the field are properly spent and effectively utilized.
- Conduct audits for compliance with CJAD rules and standards, and efficacy of programs and services.
- Provide much needed technical assistance to the field to further the mission and goals of effective community supervision.
- Provide meaningful ongoing training to probation officers so they can become certified within the period prescribed by law, as well as enhance their professional development.
- Broaden CJAD's current training capabilities on best practices for judges, district attorneys, and probation departments.
- Conduct research that will be useful to the members of the Legislature, and provide meaningful program evaluation. Research staff should also be given to CJAD so that they can identify emerging trends and best practices in the field of community corrections.

**(5) Fund TDCJ's request for Reentry Transitional Coordinators.** Specifically, the allocations made to prison diversions (including community supervision, among other things), special needs offenders, and Reentry Transitional Coordinators are all necessary to strengthen the efforts of Probation, Parole, and TDCJ in general to slow the cycle of re-offending.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to present this testimony, and I hope that you will support our funding recommendations for Texas' criminal and juvenile justice systems.