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**TEXAS CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE COALITION**

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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**REGARDING HOUSE BILL 1, ARTICLE V – PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

***SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO THE TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES***

**SUBMITTED BY ANA YÁÑEZ-CORREA, PH.D.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TEXAS CRIMINAL JUSTICE COALITION**

**To**

**THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ARTICLES I, IV, & V**

**FEBRUARY 14, 2013**

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Ana Yáñez-Correa. I am the Executive Director of the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 1, Article V, specifically as it relates to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP).

### PAROLE IS WORKING EFFECTIVELY IN TEXAS

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition greatly supports the success of Texas' parole and reentry systems, which can **safely reduce prison populations**, thus **saving taxpayers money**, as well as **reduce the number of victims** by better preparing individuals to live as law-abiding, productive, self-sufficient members of Texas communities.

Nearly 140,000 men and women are serving time in a Texas prison.<sup>1</sup> Given that most incarcerated individuals in our state corrections facilities will one day be released to the community, Texas must invest in a strong post-incarceration infrastructure to support any rehabilitative progress made by individuals while incarcerated.

**Past investments in smart parole strategies are working, and Texas must continue this critical progress.** According to the Legislative Budget Board, the revocation rates among individuals on active parole declined by half from 2004 to 2012, falling from 14.8% to 7.4%.<sup>2</sup>

The Legislative Budget Board also calculates the percentage of people who are re-incarcerated within three years following their release from prison. For individuals released between 2001 (measured through 2004) and 2009 (measured through 2012), recidivism also fell from 28.2% to 22.6%.<sup>3</sup>

**Texas spends too much on incarceration – at \$2.5 billion annually<sup>4</sup> – to short-change the post-release process.** We strongly urge you to support the BPP funding requests outlined below. Costing just more than \$25 million per year (1/100 of the costs of incarceration), these strategies promote safer communities and stronger families, and they help ensure that taxpayers are getting a real return on their multi-billion dollar investment in corrections.

### SUPPORT THE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES' BASELINE BUDGET REQUESTS

The BPP plays a critical role in protecting public safety in Texas. It is the only entity that determines which individuals can be released on parole, which conditions of parole or mandatory supervision must be imposed, and which executive clemency recommendations should be made to the Governor.

Furthermore, by making smart release decisions – thus preserving costly prison beds for individuals who have committed violent offenses and who carry a higher risk of failure on parole – the BPP creates tremendous cost savings for Texas. While the system-wide average cost to the state for prison beds is \$50.04 per inmate per day, Active Supervision parole costs

only \$3.63 per individual per day (nearly 14 times less).<sup>5</sup>

Given the agency's crucial functions, as well as the Legislative Budget Board's projected increase in parolee populations in the coming biennium,<sup>6</sup> the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition fully supports each of the BPP's baseline requests to cover operations costs, institutional parole officers, hearings, clemency determinations, and other costs.

**NOTE:** The BPP's FY 2014-15 request is conservative, seeking funding at levels only 5% higher than the current biennium to account for increases in parolee populations. However, it does not forecast any expenses associated with future lawsuits, which, if not covered, will be pulled from the BPP's general operations. Ultimately, policy-makers during the 2013 legislative session must identify strategies to improve structural and systemic deficiencies that lead to these costly lawsuits.

#### **SUPPORT A CRITICAL BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES' EXCEPTIONAL ITEM**

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition also supports the BPP's exceptional item request of \$300,000 over the biennium to update and upgrade parole guidelines [E.1.1: Consultant Services]. These funds will not only provide the BPP expert assistance in the formulation of updated guidelines, but they will allow the BPP to comply with legislation that currently mandates the agency to annually review and update these guidelines.

#### **REFERENCES**

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Fiscal Year 2012 Statistical Report*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Legislative Budget Board, *Statewide Criminal Justice Recidivism and Revocation Rates*, Submitted to the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, January 2013, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>4</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Fiscal Year 2013 Operating Budget [Fiscal Years 2014-2015 Legislative Appropriations Request]*, summary document, August 23, 2012, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Legislative Budget Board, *Criminal Justice Uniform Cost Report, Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012*, Submitted to the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, January 2013, pp. 8, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Legislative Budget Board (LBB), *Adult and Juvenile Correctional Population Projections, Fiscal Years 2013 to 2018*, Submitted to the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, January 2013, p. 11. The LBB estimates active adult parole supervision populations increasing from 87,712 in Fiscal Year 2013, to 88,378 in FY 2014, and 88,893 in FY 2015.

*Please Note:* Senate Bill 1, as introduced, estimates the average number of offenders under active parole supervision at 83,867 in FY 2014 and 85,019 in FY 2015. (A696-LBB Senate-5, p. V-15)