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TESTIMONY 2013
C.S.H.B. 1544

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present testimony in favor of C.S.H.B. 1544, an effective policy that will close a gap in Texas law and ensure that all county sheriffs are involved in critical decision-making processes about local jail contracting.

INVOLVE COUNTY SHERIFFS IN JAIL CONTRACT DECISIONS AND ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH MINIMUM JAIL STANDARDS

Texas county sheriffs are responsible for local jails, and should thus be involved in all decisions pertaining to jail contracting. In Texas' largest county (Harris), however, the sheriff is excluded from decisions about potential privatization of jails. C.S.H.B. 1544 will correct this discrepancy and ensure that all Texas sheriffs are involved in decisions about the jails that they are responsible for.

C.S.H.B. 1544 will also ensure that all jail contractors meet or exceed the minimum standards established by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards (Commission). The Commission's mission is to assist local governments in providing safe and secure local jail facilities.¹ The Commission provides counties with technical assistance on jail operations and services, and it produces cost savings for Texas by identifying fiscal inefficiencies and helping counties avoid liabilities associated with poor conditions of confinement. By requiring contracted jail facilities to comply with established standards, C.S.H.B. 1544 will ensure that all county jails are safe, sanitary, well managed, and accountable to the state's jail oversight agency, thus better protecting those working and confined in such facilities.

COST-SAVING AND PUBLIC SAFETY-DRIVEN SOLUTION: SUPPORT C.S.H.B. 1544 BY REPRESENTATIVE ALLEN

- C.S.H.B. 1544 will ensure that all Texas county sheriffs are included in local jail contracting decisions and able to lend their expertise on critical issues.
- C.S.H.B. 1544 will ensure that all jail contractors meet or exceed the minimum standards, inspection procedures, and enforcement policies established by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, which will protect jail personnel and incarcerated individuals through safer and more accountable local jails.
- C.S.H.B. 1544 will promote efficient spending practices and decrease taxpayer waste.

Citations

¹ Compact with Texas, Texas Commission on Jail Standards.