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“Spend Your Values, Cut Your Losses”: Justice Advocacy Group Releases 2021 Legislative Strategy

Texas Criminal Justice Coalition Releases Divestment Portfolio Urging Legislators to Fund Community, Not Corrections, During Budget Shortfall

AUSTIN, TX — Today, the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) released its legislative strategy for the 2021 Texas Legislative Session. The organization’s strategy is presented as a “[divestment portfolio](#)” for Texas lawmakers and is titled *Spend Your Values, Cut Your Losses: Smart and Safe Justice System Solutions that Put Communities First*.

With Texas facing a projected \$4.6 billion shortfall by the end of 2021, and spending \$3.4 billion on corrections annually, TCJC’s policy team recognized a unique opportunity in the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic—a path to urge leadership to invest in community health and wellness, and safely divest from the bloated justice system. Through months of rigorous research, TCJC crafted seven “Smart and Safe Solutions” that would save the state money, advance racial justice, protect communities, and foster public health. These solutions represent a top-down realignment in how taxpayer money is spent.

“The policies recommended in this portfolio are reforms that we’ve long known Texas needs,” said **TCJC Senior Policy Analyst, Doug Smith**. “In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, lawmakers have the opportunity to save lives while promoting real public safety—and to save money in the process. We are calling on leaders to spend our shared values by prioritizing the health and welfare of their constituents, while cutting our losses in the costly, harmful, and ineffective justice system.”

The “Spend Your Values, Cut Your Losses” [portfolio](#) includes the following recommendations:

1. Lower penalties for minor drug possession to free up funding for strategies that get Texans back on their feet.
2. Require probation practices to focus on rehabilitation and more prudently use taxpayer dollars.
3. Reform our parole system by providing rehabilitation before parole review, thereby saving hundreds of millions of dollars annually.
4. Support reentry strategies that prioritize housing and employment stability and wise spending.
5. Make smarter use of treatment programs to ensure participant success.
6. Ensure success for Texas kids through cost-effective strategies that meet their needs.
7. Close more prisons and reallocate dollars to community needs and crime prevention.

These proposals would impact every level of the justice system, with the potential to improve outcomes for individuals, families, and communities in every corner of Texas.

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“Instead of pouring valuable resources into a corrections system that we know causes harm, our leaders have an opportunity to prevent crime by investing, and repairing harm, in our communities,” said **TCJC Policy Analyst, Alycia Castillo**. “By funneling that funding into education, violence prevention, housing, treatment, and more, lawmakers can invest in their constituents. As the COVID-19 crisis devastates incarcerated populations and rips away financial support from families across the state, spending our values is a moral imperative as well as a fiscal one.”

TCJC will release further information on other legislative strategies within the next two months, including additional data related to these solutions as it becomes available. To read why “Texas Cannot Afford to Wait for Justice” in an open letter sent to every state legislator last month, click [here](#). The full *Spend Your Values, Cut Your Losses* portfolio is available on the TCJC website [here](#).

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The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) advances solutions and builds coalitions to end mass incarceration and build safer Texas communities. To learn more about TCJC, visit www.TexasCJC.org.