

# Give People Earlier Access to Rehabilitative Programming Behind Bars, and Focus Parole Reviews on Rehabilitative Progress

## Policy Background

Approximately 124,000 people are in Texas prisons. As of late 2022, nearly 23,000 were listed as “in [the] parole review process.”<sup>1</sup> Under Texas’ current parole guidelines, the Board of Pardons and Paroles is directed during the parole review process to contact the prosecuting attorney, review the person’s criminal record, and evaluate prison disciplinary records. The Board is not able to evaluate an individual’s progress in certain rehabilitative programs when determining parole because only the Board can place people in those programs – which, under current practice, comes *after* a person’s parole review.

People should have earlier access to programming – like substance use treatment and cognitive intervention – while they’re incarcerated. Otherwise, the years prior to and between parole reviews are wasted opportunities to rehabilitate individuals. Additionally, Texas should shift the focus of parole reviews to factors an applicant can control – meaning, people should be evaluated on their progress in rehabilitative programs, not static factors like the nature of the crime.

## Proposed Solution

Texas leaders should shift toward a parole system that provides rehabilitative services prior to parole review. More specifically, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice should give people an individualized treatment plan and have them complete pre-release and rehabilitative services before their review. Then, the Parole Board should base each person’s review on their success in completing that programming.

## Relevant Bills

- **Bill Number:** [HB 353](#) [Jarvis Johnson]  
**Bill Caption:** Relating to parole determinations and individual treatment plans for inmates.  
**Materials:** [FAQ produced by the Statewide Leadership Council](#)

## Other Materials

- TCJE webpage: [Statewide Leadership Council 2023 Priorities](#) (opens in a new tab)(Common-Sense Parole) [2022-23]
- TCJE (opens in a new tab)testimony on the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, including health care and related parole improvements, submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V [February 2023]
- TCJE's 2021 legislative portfolio: [Spend Your Values, Cut Your Losses](#) (opens in a new tab)(Smart and Safe Solution #3), with [corresponding webpage](#) (recommendation 1 and 2) (opens in a new tab)[2021]
- Statewide Leadership Council training video: [Getting Involved in Parole Reform](#) (opens in a new tab)[February 2021]
- Statewide Leadership Council video: [Introduction to Parole Reform](#) (opens in a new tab)[January 2021]

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, [Inside TDCJ](#) (opens in a new tab) [see *High Value Data Sets*].