

[2019 Session] Implement Holistic Reform Throughout the State's Juvenile Justice System

Policy Background

In 2006, media and governmental scrutiny uncovered rampant sexual and physical abuse in the state's juvenile corrections facilities, leading to a federal investigation and [omnibus legislation](#) in 2007 that removed all kids with misdemeanors from state secure confinement. Over the course of subsequent legislative sessions, the state has begun to redirect funding toward localized rehabilitation programs. Ultimately, seven state secure facilities have closed and the number of kids incarcerated in the five remaining facilities has dropped from 5,000 to under 1,000 today. Despite this progress, allegations of abuse, neglect, and staffing shortages in juvenile facilities resurfaced in late 2017.¹ Also problematic, the majority of the 800 kids annually entering Texas' state secure juvenile facilities have specialized mental health and substance use needs.²

Proposed Solution

Continue the state's juvenile system regionalization by expanding funding for smaller, local therapeutic facilities and community-based programming, where kids' underlying needs (including mental health, substance use, trauma, and behavioral issues) can be addressed in the least restrictive setting – and closer to home. This will safely reduce the incarcerated juvenile population in the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD), setting more kids down a path to success, lowering staff-to-youth ratios in state secure facilities, and freeing up resources for kids with higher-level needs.

Also require TJJD facilities to implement trauma-informed care across programs, emphasize treatment over punishment, maintain strong monitoring of conditions and allegations of abuse or neglect, improve opportunities for family interaction, and implement earlier after-care and reentry strategies to help kids successfully transition back into Texas communities.

Relevant Bills

- **Bill Number:** [HB 507](#) [White]
Bill Caption: Relating to a task force to coordinate and make recommendations on parent engagement and education programs provided by state agencies.

House Hearing Notice: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, March 13, 2019](#)

TCJE House Action: [Card in support](#)

House Hearing Video: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, 3/13/19](#)

- **Bill Number:** [HB 3015](#) [Talarico, White]
Bill Caption: Relating to educational programs provided by the Windham School District in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for certain inmates.
House Hearing Notice: [Corrections, April 11, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Testimony in support](#) | [Card in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Corrections, 4/11/19](#)
- **Bill Number:** [HB 3648](#) [Guillen | Sponsor: Whimire]
Bill Caption: Relating to the powers and duties of the office of independent ombudsman for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.
House Hearing Notice: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, April 3, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Card in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, 4/3/19](#)
Senate Hearing Notice: [Criminal Justice, May 15, 2019](#)
TCJE Senate Action: [Card in support](#)
Senate Hearing Video: [Criminal Justice, 5/15/19](#)
VETOED
- **Bill Number:** [HB 4607](#) [White]
Bill Caption: Relating to the construction of small occupancy facilities by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.
House Hearing Notice: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, April 24, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Testimony in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, 4/24/19](#)

Bills Related to Diversion or Community-Based Supports for Kids

- **Bill Number:** [HB 10](#) [Senfronia Thompson, Greg Bonnen, Coleman, Phelan, Moody | Sponsor: Kolkhorst]
Bill Caption: Relating to the creation of the Texas Mental and Behavioral Health Research Institute.
House Hearing Notice: [Public Health, February 27, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Card in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Public Health, 2/27/19](#)
Senate Hearing Notice: [Health & Human Services, May 7, 2019](#)

TCJE Senate Action: [Card in support](#)

Senate Hearing Video: [Health & Human Services, 5/7/19](#)

- **Bill Number:** [HB 501](#) [Senfronia Thompson]
Bill Caption: Relating to the requirement and study of insurance coverage for serious emotional disturbance of a child.
House Hearing Notice: [Insurance, March 12, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Card in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Insurance 3/12/19](#)
- **Bill Number:** [HB 1771](#) [Thierry, Dutton, Senfronia Thompson, Shaheen, Miller | Sponsor: Huffman]
Bill Caption: Relating to a prohibition on prosecuting or referring to juvenile court certain persons for certain conduct constituting the offense of prostitution and to the provision of services to those persons.
House Hearing Notice: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, April 3, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Testimony in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, 4/3/19](#)
Senate Hearing Notice: [State Affairs, May 17, 2019](#)
TCJE Senate Action: [Card in support](#)
Senate Hearing Video: [State Affairs, 5/17/19](#)
VETOED
- **Bill Number:** [HB 2991](#) [Talarico, Bernal]
Bill Caption: Relating to the use of disciplinary alternatives to suspension by a school district and the creation of the restorative justice coordinating council.
TCJE Materials: [Infographic](#)
House Hearing Notice: [Public Education, April 9, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Testimony in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Public Education, 4/9/19](#)
- **Bill Number:** [HB 4107](#) [Wu]
Bill Caption: Relating to establishing a restorative justice program for certain student conduct constituting a criminal offense that occurs on school property, on school transportation, or at school-sponsored or school-related activities.
House Hearing Notice: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, April 17, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Card in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, 4/17/19](#)

- **Bill Number:** [HB 4183](#) [Parker, Zerwas, Miller, Senfronia Thompson, Sanford | Sponsor: Perry]
Bill Caption: Relating to addressing adverse childhood experiences and developing a strategic plan to address those experiences.
House Hearing Notice: [Public Health, April 3, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Testimony in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Public Health, 4/3/19](#)
Senate Hearing Notice: [Health & Human Services, May 15, 2019](#)
TCJE Senate Action: [Card in support](#)
Senate Hearing Video: [Health & Human Services, 5/15/19](#)
- **Bill Number:** [HB 4606](#) [White]
Bill Caption: Relating to youth diversion programs for children accused of certain fine-only offenses and related criminal justice matters; authorizing and imposing fees.
House Hearing Notice: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, April 10, 2019](#)
TCJE House Action: [Card in support](#)
House Hearing Video: [Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, 4/10/19](#)
- **Bill Number:** [SB 314](#) [Zaffirini]
Bill Caption: Relating to the requirement and study of insurance coverage for serious emotional disturbance of a child.
- **Bill Number:** [SB 1279](#) [West | Sponsor: Phelan]
Bill Caption: Relating to prevention and early intervention programs and practices.
Senate Hearing Notice: [Health & Human Services, April 9, 2019](#)
TCJE Senate Action: [Card in support](#)
Senate Hearing Video: [Health & Human Services, 4/9/19](#)
House Hearing Notice: [Human Services, May 14, 2019](#)
House Hearing Video: [Human Services, 5/14/19](#)

Other Materials

- TCJE [Testimony](#) on the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, submitted to Senate Finance Committee [January 2019]
- TCJE [Testimony](#) on the Texas Juvenile Justice Department's Legislative Appropriations Request, submitted to the Governor's Office of Budget, Planning and Policy and the Legislative Budget Board [August 2018]

- Texas Juvenile Justice Department Report: [Short-Term Solutions and Long-Term Goals: A Plan for TJJD](#) [June 2018]
- Postcard: [Treat Kids Like Kids](#) [June 2018]
- Advocates' [Recommendations](#) for Next Steps in Texas Juvenile Justice Reform [produced by TCJE, Texans Care for Children, Disability Rights Texas, Texas Appleseed, ACLU of Texas, and Children's Defense Fund–Texas, January 2018]
- TCJE Blog Post: [Abuse & Neglect of Kids Reported in a Texas Youth Facility: We Need Urgent Reform](#) [November 2017]
- Advocates' [Letter to State Leadership](#) Regarding Assaults in Youth Facilities [submitted by TCJE, Texans Care for Children, Texas Appleseed, and the ACLU of Texas, November 2017]

1 Brandi Grissom and Sue Ambrose, "[Fights, sex, drugs: Texas juvenile lockup on the verge of crisis, reports show](#)," *Dallas News*, November 16, 2017.

2 Texas Juvenile Justice Department, [Youth Characteristics: New Admissions FY 2013 - FY 2017](#).