

[2015 Session] Continue to Fund Investments in a Strong Probation System by Helping Probation Departments Implement Localized “Commitment Reduction Plans” to Safely Reduce the Number of Individuals Who Fail Probation Terms and Are Sent to Prison

Policy Background:

In 2011, the Texas Legislature passed legislation [[SB 1055](#)] to provide local probation departments with the opportunity to request funding to develop Commitment Reduction Plans. Through these plans, counties set target reduction goals to safely reduce the number of people from that county who will be sent to prison or state jail, either as a result of direct sentencing to that facility or due to a probation revocation. Participation in the plan is completely voluntary, and counties may choose to partner with other counties to set and achieve their desired targets. Counties can also collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders, including district attorneys, judges, local treatment providers, and others, while formulating the plan.

Participating counties should receive an upfront, lump sum of the savings from commitment reductions to establish the programs necessary to safely meet their reduction goals; funds will then be apportioned to participating counties based on their continued performance and ability to achieve their desired goals. At this point, counties need the promised front-end funding to implement their plans.

Texas policy-makers should take all steps to fully fund these promising programs, which are designed to save money and increase public safety through strategic supervision and specialized programming for certain system-involved individuals.

Key Facts:

- As of August 2014, approximately 390,000 people were on probation in Texas, with 251,000 on direct supervision (meaning they have at least one face-to-face contact with a probation officer every three months).[1]
- Over time, felony probation revocation rates have generally fallen, from a high of 16.7% in 2004 to 14.5% in 2012.[2]
- Technical violations of supervision conditions – which do not constitute new offenses, but instead include things like failing to pay court-ordered fees or report to a probation officer – accounted for approximately 50% of adult felony probation revocations in Fiscal Year 2012.[3]
- Felony probation revocations accounted for 13,523 of 44,608 prison admissions (30.3%) in Fiscal Year 2012, and they accounted for 9,926 of 23,226 state jail admissions (42.7%) in Fiscal Year 2012.[4]

Relevant Bill:

- **Bill Number:** [HB 1930](#) (authors: James White, Flynn | sponsor: Menéndez)
Bill Caption: Relating to strategic planning for the operation of community supervision and corrections departments.
Hearing Notice: House Corrections Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on April 23, 2015](#)
Senate Hearing Notice: Senate Criminal Justice Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on May 21, 2015](#)
Outcome: [Effective 9/1/15](#)

[1] Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Statistical Report: Fiscal Year 2014*, pp. iii, 6; http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2014.pdf

[2] Legislative Budget Board, *Statewide Criminal Justice Recidivism and Revocation Rates*, January 2013, p. 11; www.lbb.state.tx.us/Public_Safety_Criminal_Justice/RecRev_Rates/Statewide%20Criminal%20Justice%20Recidivism%20and%20Revocation%20Rates2012.pdf

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 11, 19.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 19.