



NEW REPORT SHOWS GROWING NUMBER OF WOMEN IN TEXAS PRISONS AND JAILS

Texas Criminal Justice Coalition Calls for Reforms to Safely Reduce the Number of Women In Texas' Criminal Justice System

AUSTIN, TX (March 8, 2018) — Today, the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC), a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization focused on adult and youth justice policy reform, released part one of a two-part report series on women in Texas prisons and jails. *A Growing Population: The Surge of Women into Texas' Criminal Justice System* examines the staggering rise in the number of women in Texas' justice system and makes recommendations for programs and policies that can reverse this trend and effectively redirect women away from incarceration.

"While issues facing system-impacted women are abundant and complex, two predominant themes developed in our research," said **Lindsey Linder, Policy Attorney at TCJC and the report's author**. "First, the number of women in the Texas criminal justice system has rapidly increased for decades. And second, Texas is failing to adequately support these women."

Texas incarcerates more women by sheer number than any other U.S. state – now totaling more than 12,000 women in the state corrections system, the majority for nonviolent offenses. Since 1980, female incarceration in Texas prisons has increased 908%, compared to an increase in the male prison population of 396%. From 2009-2016, Texas reduced its men's prison population by 8,577 while backfilling its prisons with 554 women.

"Research shows the unique circumstances of women, including a history of physical or sexual abuse, mental health issues, and substance use disorders, that affect the increasing population rate and pose significant challenges to their post-release reintegration," said **Justice Rebeca Martinez, Texas 4th Court of Appeals**.

TCJC's report substantiates this, including through the results of a survey of more than 430 women incarcerated in Texas prisons.

"The vast majority of women in Texas prisons have extensive trauma histories and most of them are mothers," said Linder. "Others have faced poverty, as well as trouble accessing housing, employment, and education opportunities, which lead to justice system involvement. It is critical that we help these women address the root causes of their criminality through community supports and services, rather than through incarceration."

TCJC urges local and state officials to adopt the report's recommendations, which emphasize pretrial diversion, specialized treatment options for women on probation, bail reform, and more help for women with drug offenses. These improvements will hold women accountable while helping them heal and allowing them to remain in their communities and with their families—essential steps to improve public safety and reduce costs associated with incarceration.

“We must do a better job of diverting women into community programs that help them stay out of jails and prisons and connected with their children and families,” said **Honorable Beckie Palomo, Texas District Court Judge**.

For a copy of the report, visit www.TexasCJC.org/womens-justice.

About the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization focused primarily on adult and youth justice policy reform at the state and county level. With a commitment to strengthening families and communities across Texas, TCJC brings expertise and diverse perspectives to identify and advance solutions that help Texas spend money responsibly and ensure incarceration is rare and the last response after other, more appropriate interventions have been tried and have failed. To learn more, visit www.texascjc.org.

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