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2019 FACT SHEET

HB 2169

Dignity for Incarcerated Women

HB 2169 will improve the treatment of women incarcerated in Texas' county jail facilities, and improve data collection on the number of women being detained in county jails.

Dear Chair Coleman and members of the Committee, my name is Lindsey Linder and I am Senior Policy Attorney at the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. Thank you for allowing me to provide this information in support of HB 2169.

INCARCERATED WOMEN LACK BASIC NECESSITIES THAT HELP MAINTAIN HEALTH AND DIGNITY

The number of women in Texas prisons has grown by nearly 1,000 percent since 1980 (more than twice the rate of men).¹ Texas now incarcerates more women by sheer number than any other state in the nation.² The number of women in Texas jails awaiting trial — totaling around 6,300 — has grown 48% since 2011, even as the number of female arrests in Texas has decreased 20% over that time period.³ However, because women comprise only a small portion of the overall incarcerated population, their needs have been largely disregarded in larger criminal justice reform conversations.

In May of 2017, the *Houston Chronicle* reported that jails across Texas are failing to provide incarcerated women with appropriate feminine hygiene products⁴ — but these items are basic necessities, critical to maintaining both physical health and dignity.

SOLUTION: SUPPORT HB 2169 BY REPRESENTATIVES ALLEN AND ROSENTHAL

HB 2169 would improve outcomes for justice system-involved women by requiring the Texas Commission on Jail Standards to do the following:

- Establish minimum standards for the quality and quantity of feminine hygiene products; and
- Include data on the number of females being detained in county jails in the Commission's monthly population reports.

HB 2169 addresses a critical issue facing women incarcerated in Texas' county jails. **Ultimately, this bill will require county jails to better treat women with dignity by providing an adequate quantity and quality of feminine hygiene products, and it will allow for better data collection on the growing number of women in Texas' county jails**, which can inform future policies and practices.

Thank you for allowing me to present this information, and I urge you to support HB 2169.

¹ Texas Department of Criminal Justice, data request, 2017.

² Aleks Kajstura, Prison Policy Initiative, in a call with TCJC Policy Attorney Lindsey Linder on September 5, 2017. This refers to all incarcerated women, including immigrant detainees, and is based on 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data.

³ Cary Aspinwall, "More Women Are Jailed in Texas, Even Though Arrests Have Dropped. Why?," *Dallas News*, December 3, 2017, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/socialjustice-1/2017/12/03/women-jailed-texas-eventhough-arrests-gone>.

⁴ Emily Foxhall, "Jails Struggle with Hygiene for Some Women Inmates," *Houston Chronicle*, May 19, 2017, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Jails-struggle-with-hygiene-for-some-women-inmates-11142604.php>.