

November 3, 2017

Scott Fisher, Board Chair  
Texas Juvenile Justice Department Board  
Texas Juvenile Justice Department  
P.O. Box 12757  
Austin, TX 78711-2757

**Re: Qualifications to be considered in Executive Director search**

Dear Chair Fisher and Members of the Board,

We the undersigned organizations work to promote a juvenile justice system that is well-equipped to promote public safety, address the needs of Texas youth, and facilitate positive outcomes in safe, rehabilitative settings.

As you know, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJJ) has had three Executive Directors (E.D.) and at least one Interim E.D. since the agency's creation in December 2011. As you embark on hiring the agency's new E.D. during this next transition, we would like to provide some thoughts and recommendations for your consideration. Your decision will be critical in strengthening the agency's prioritization of community- and family-based programs that safely reduce the number of youth in secure confinement, while implementing additional strategies throughout the system to keep youth safe, address the root causes of crime, increase public safety, and save taxpayers' money.

**First and foremost, we encourage the Board to extend the E.D. search beyond Texas** to ensure the most qualified, diverse pool of candidates. We also encourage the Board to conduct the hiring process in the most transparent way possible.

In consideration of the significant responsibility of the next E.D, **we urge the Board to select a candidate with the following qualifications to best ensure the agency effectively meets its mission.** The candidate should:

- Be committed to the values of accountability, excellence, fairness, integrity, respect, and transparency.
- Be committed to the statutorily mandated purpose goals of the agency, including: creating a unified juvenile justice system that provides a full continuum of effective services; prioritizing community- and family-based programs over commitment to a secure facility; supporting a county-based system that reduces the need for out-of-home placement; locating facilities close to necessary workforce and youths' families; and using secure facilities—when necessary—that are sized for effective rehabilitation.
- Have demonstrated facilitation of system reform and transformation in the juvenile justice system.
- Have a broad-based perspective on youth justice policy, including familiarity with evidence-based and promising practices in the fields of primary prevention, diversion, risk/needs assessments, treatment and other service provisions, safe conditions of confinement and re-entry, and an ability to recognize the importance of assessing and addressing the holistic needs of children, including those on juvenile probation.

- Be committed to meeting with superintendents, juvenile correctional officers, other juvenile system practitioners, and advocates in juvenile justice, mental health, and education to ensure the widest input of expertise.
- Have an understanding of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and a determination to maintain PREA compliance throughout all facilities in the system.
- Have demonstrated success in the implementation of best practices in staff recruitment and retention in juvenile justice settings, with an ability to transcend traditional discipline and organizational boundaries.

**We hope that this letter is the beginning of a conversation, and we would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and the members of the board to continue this discussion.**

We look forward to continued collaboration with you and the agency's new Executive Director as he or she works towards positive, transformative change throughout Texas' juvenile justice system.

Please feel free to contact us for further information or with any questions.

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CC: State Senator John Whitmire, Chair, Senate Committee on Criminal Justice  
State Representative Harold V. Dutton, Jr., Chair, House of Representatives Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues