



## HB 2754: Improve Reentry Outcomes and Increase Public Safety Through Housing Vouchers

### REENTRY IN ITS CURRENT STATE

Typically, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) does not determine whether a parole-eligible individual has a housing plan until they are approved for release. **People approved for parole who have no housing plan must wait in prison for months or even more than a year for an available bed in a residential reentry center (RRC).** Texas only has 2,000 state-funded RRC beds in eight facilities throughout the state, all operated by private prison corporations.<sup>1</sup>

#### IN SHORT

HB 2754 will expand opportunities for safe housing options for people approved for parole, establish a task force to aid in this effort, and save Texans money.

AVERAGE MONTHLY COST PER PERSON



Because of the bed scarcity, parolees placed into RRC's are often far from their familial support systems. Also problematic, RRC's are widely known not to provide an environment conducive to successful reentry, yet **Texas spends more than \$35 million each year on RRC beds.**<sup>2</sup> The state's investment in these centers becomes more troubling when one considers that **it could provide monthly housing stipends during the reentry period to more than double the number of people housed in RRCs.**<sup>3</sup> Indeed, high-quality,<sup>4</sup> alternative housing options such as Oxford Houses start around \$500 per month.<sup>5</sup>

**HB 2754 provides a key opportunity to expand housing options, improve standards, and reduce costs.**

### SUPPORT HB 2754 BY REPRESENTATIVE ALLEN

**HB 2754 gives individuals leaving a prison an opportunity for better outcomes.**

- This bill establishes the Reentry Housing Task Force to set standards for reentry housing, helping to elevate alternative housing options to national best practices.
- The bill requires TDCJ to identify people without a housing plan well before discharge or parole release, which will enable the agency to connect individuals to housing rather than hold them in prison for months waiting for an RRC bed.
- This bill also requires TDCJ to seek grants to expand the use of temporary post-release housing vouchers to reduce wait times, and to evaluate outcomes of those placed into housing that meets the standards developed by the Task Force.
- This bill requires TDCJ to annually report on its efforts to find post-release housing, reduce the length of time between parole approval and release, and expand post-release housing options in local communities.

*Citations on reverse.*

## Citations

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice Parole Division, *Directory – Residential Reentry Centers*, [https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/pd/halfway\\_houses.html](https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/pd/halfway_houses.html).

<sup>2</sup> Legislative Budget Board, *General Appropriations Act for the 2020-21 Biennium*, [https://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/GAA/General\\_Appropriations\\_Act\\_2020\\_2021.pdf](https://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/GAA/General_Appropriations_Act_2020_2021.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Costs were based on an estimated monthly housing voucher of \$500 multiplied by 4,000 parolees, then by 12 months. The number of people the state could house through housing vouchers may be much higher when considering the variance in monthly rental costs by city.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Jason and Joseph Ferrari, "Oxford House Recovery Homes: Characteristics and Effectiveness," *Psychological Services*, 2010, Vol 7, No. 2, 92–102, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2888149/>.

<sup>5</sup> Oxford House, Inc., *OXFORD HOUSE™ AND TEXAS: A Comprehensive Survey Report on the Network of Texas Oxford Houses and their Residents*, December 17, 2015, [https://oxfordhouse.org/userfiles/file/doc/eval\\_tx2015.pdf](https://oxfordhouse.org/userfiles/file/doc/eval_tx2015.pdf). This survey reports an average monthly cost of \$500 for residency at Oxford House.