

From: [Texas Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)
Date: Thursday, November 14, 2024 8:52:41 AM

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Submitted by: Visitor

Submitted values are:

Choose the agency that you would like to provide input about
[Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#)

Public Comments

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First Name

Koretta

Last Name

Brown

Title

Executive Director

Organization you are affiliated with

Bridges To Empowerment

Email

City

Fresno

State

Texas

Your Comments or Concerns

Theory of Change to the Sunset Advisory Committee:

The Texas prison system faces a critical challenge in retaining correctional officers and essential staff, a problem that threatens both the safety of officers and inmates and the stability of our correctional institutions. High turnover rates, unsafe working conditions, and low morale are impacting the well-being and efficacy of those charged with maintaining order and accountability in our prisons and jails.

Rather than increasing the number of facilities, we propose a strategic and conservative investment focused on improving the work environment for correctional officers to enhance retention and effectiveness. Our approach centers on three key recommendations:

Your Proposed Solution

Our approach centers on three key recommendations:

1. Professionalizing the Correctional Officer Role

We must recognize the unique challenges correctional officers face, often needing to address complex psychological and behavioral issues among inmates. To improve staff quality and job satisfaction, we recommend incentivizing the recruitment and retention of officers with advanced degrees, particularly in fields like psychology and mental health. Officers equipped with these skills can better de-escalate conflicts, potentially reducing instances of violence and allowing officers to address behavioral issues at their core. This more holistic, skilled approach contributes to a safer environment for both officers and inmates while upholding the sentencing and accountability determined by our courts.

2. Enhancing Housing Conditions for Officers

The living conditions for correctional officers must reflect our commitment to supporting those who work to maintain public safety. Officers often reside in military-style bunk arrangements or inadequate housing, which negatively affects their perception of their role and their quality of life. By providing more appealing, community-oriented housing—such as homes with shared living spaces that feel like a true residence for 5 to 6 officers—we can foster a sense of respect, stability, and morale among our officers. A dignified living environment will improve retention and the overall culture within the prison system.

3. Financial Support for Officers' Basic Needs

Finally, to mitigate the effects of inflation and economic pressures, we propose providing correctional officers with supplemental benefits, including food assistance. Currently, many officers earn wages below what is necessary to sustain a quality lifestyle, despite the demanding nature of their roles. Financial support for essential needs would help alleviate stress, reduce mental health challenges like depression, and, in turn, positively impact officers' interactions with those in their care.

By investing in a work environment that respects and supports correctional officers, Texas can improve officer retention, foster a safer and more stable prison system, and uphold our state's standards for order and accountability. We are not calling for an increase in facilities or a new allocation of funds for prisons; rather, we seek to strengthen the foundation we already have by committing to the long-term well-being and professionalism of our correctional staff.

My Comments Will Be Made Public

Yes