

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Janet Wood](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 9:41:35 AM

From: Texas Sunset Advisory Commission <sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 9:21 AM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission <sunset@sunset.texas.gov>
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)

Submitted on Tue, 11/12/2024 - 08:03

Submitted by: Visitor

Submitted values are:

Choose the agency that you would like to provide input about

[Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#)

Public Comments

1

First Name

Amanda

Last Name

Ortiz

Organization you are affiliated with

Texas Prisons Committee Advocacy

Email

City

Austin

State

Texas

Your Comments or Concerns

Incarcerated people remain human beings, no different in their desire to belong, to have a voice, and to be valued. They are our neighbors, our family members, and our community members—many of whom will return to our neighborhoods and build new lives among us. They are affected by

the same laws, economic policies, and social issues that influence us all. Denying incarcerated people the right to vote severs this essential connection to society, pushing them further to the margins and hindering their rehabilitation. It's a policy that suggests their voices and experiences don't matter, which contradicts our values of equality, dignity, and justice.

Moreover, the impact of disenfranchisement falls disproportionately on communities of color. In Texas, for example, Black people make up about 12% of the state population but represent nearly 34% of the prison population. Hispanic individuals are similarly overrepresented. Silencing these voices means that entire communities lose representation, perpetuating cycles of inequality and marginalization. Research has shown that states with voting rights for incarcerated people see stronger community engagement and lower rates of recidivism upon reentry. This is because the right to vote fosters a connection to society, signaling that every individual has a place and a responsibility within our democracy.

As a society, do we not have a responsibility to uphold justice and fairness for all, including those who may have lost their way? And what might it say about us if we deny their voice when they need our support most?

Your Proposed Solution

I urge Texas to restore the right to vote for all incarcerated individuals, allowing them to participate in our democratic process. This can be achieved by offering absentee voting options or, where feasible, in-person voting access within correctional facilities. Research indicates that states allowing incarcerated individuals to vote experience fewer reentry barriers, and the act of voting has been linked to stronger civic engagement and reduced likelihood of reoffending. Giving incarcerated individuals the chance to vote does not excuse past wrongs; rather, it strengthens their connection to society and opens a pathway toward responsible, engaged citizenship. It sends a message that, while they may be serving time, they still have a stake in shaping a society that values justice, empathy, and second chances.

My Comments Will Be Made Public

Yes