

From: [Texas Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)
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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

Jessie

Last Name

Passafuma

Title

Vice President

Organization you are affiliated with

Restorer Of City Streets

Email

City

Trinity

State

Texas

Your Comments or Concerns

Good day, members of the Sunset Advisory Board. My name is Jessie Passafuma, and I am a former incarcerated individual who has since successfully reintegrated into society, graduating summa cum laude from the College of Biblical Studies and now pursuing a Master of Public Health at Sam Houston State University. I am here today to address an urgent issue that profoundly impacts the health, well-being, and rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ): the inadequate and nutritionally deficient diet served to those in the state's correctional facilities.

Currently, the meals provided in TDCJ facilities fail to meet the basic nutritional needs of the incarcerated population, many of whom face additional physical and mental health challenges. Despite TDCJ's claim to meet FDA dietary standards, the reality is that the food served is

substandard and often insufficient to support the health of inmates. During my research, I obtained photos of actual meals served at TDCJ facilities, including regular trays and sack lunches provided during lockdowns, revealing an apparent disparity between the claimed nutritional standards and what is actually provided. These meals lack essential vitamins, minerals, and adequate portions of protein, contributing to malnutrition, weakened immune systems, chronic health issues, and overall poor physical and mental health.

Consequences of Inadequate nutrition

Health Risks: The lack of proper nutrition leads to malnutrition, weight loss, and the worsening of pre-existing health conditions, which result in higher healthcare costs for the state and more sick individuals in the system. Inadequate diets are a direct cause of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

Behavioral Issues: When inmates are not properly nourished, they are more likely to engage in criminal behavior within the facility, including theft and exploitation of other inmates for food. This not only undermines the rehabilitation efforts of TDCJ per its mission statement but creates an unsafe and chaotic environment.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration: A nutritious diet is essential for mental clarity, physical strength, and emotional well-being. Without proper food, incarcerated individuals are less likely to succeed in educational programs, work assignments, or any rehabilitation initiatives that would prepare them for reintegration into society.

Long-Term Healthcare Costs: The failure to address nutritional needs now will only result in greater healthcare costs down the road, as individuals who are undernourished or suffering from malnutrition may require more intensive and expensive medical care.

The quality of food provided to incarcerated individuals in Texas directly reflects our societal values and our commitment to human dignity. The current state of affairs in TDCJ facilities is untenable. As we work towards criminal justice reform and rehabilitating offenders, we must begin by ensuring that incarcerated individuals receive adequate nutrition to support their health and rehabilitation efforts.

Reforming the prison diet will improve the physical and mental well-being of inmates, reduce long-term healthcare costs, create safer and more rehabilitative environments, and ultimately help individuals successfully reintegrate into society upon release. I urge this board to take immediate, meaningful steps to address this issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Your Proposed Solution

1. **Increase Nutritional Standards:** TDCJ must review and revise the current food program to ensure that meals meet, if not exceed, the FDA's recommended daily values for all essential nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, and protein. This should be done with input from nutrition experts to ensure that diets are balanced and healthy for individuals with different health needs.

2. **Transparency and Public Access to Nutritional Information:** TDCJ must make the nutritional values of the meals provided available to the public. This information should be easily accessible on their website and reflect an ongoing commitment to transparency in the

food system. Regular audits should be conducted to ensure compliance with nutritional standards.

3. Incorporate Fresh, Whole Foods: Incorporating fresh fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins into the meal plans can significantly improve the overall nutritional value of meals. Additionally, programs such as prison farms or partnerships with local food producers could be utilized to reduce costs and provide fresher ingredients.

I implore you to look at Maine's Organic Program and the overall positive outcomes

Attachment

[TDCJ Diet Photos.pdf](#) (1.52 MB)

My Comments Will Be Made Public

Yes