

The logo features the name "gaye" in a white, lowercase, serif font, centered within a teal rectangular background.

WEINTRAUB

November 14, 2024

Via Electronic Submission

Texas Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711

Re: Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Dear Messrs. Austin, Bell, Blanco, Canales, Elswick, Hull, Kitzman, Middleton, Parker, Paxton, Shaheen, and Sparks:

My name is Gaye Weintraub, and my biological uncle is incarcerated at the Stiles Unit in Beaumont. My testimony this morning focuses on not only the inadequate staffing issues facing TDCJ but the strain existing officers endure due to staffing shortages throughout the prison system.

It is a verified fact the officer to inmate ratio is grossly disproportionate. Officers publicly complain they cannot leave their posts until relief arrives, and the significant staffing shortages often translate to officers being forced to work 16-, 18-, and even 24-hour shifts. These overworked officers often can be found asleep on the job. In some cases, exhausted officers may even fall asleep behind the wheel of their cars driving home from work and drift into oncoming traffic, killing themselves and injuring others, as allegedly was the case last Friday morning in Orange.

The staffing shortages could be alleviated by closing some of the red brick units and using those officers to fill vacancies at other units. To do so, legislature would have to revisit House Bill 1064 that stalled in committee during the last legislative session. Known as "The Good Time Bill," House Bill 1064 provides good time credit to aggravated offenses and would make eligible for immediate release nearly 20,000 prisoners over the age of 50 with at least 20 calendar years of their sentences completed. Statistics show less than four percent of inmates over 50 return to prison. And while inmates over 55 account for nearly 15 percent of the total inmate population of TDCJ, they account for nearly one-half of the system's escalating medical costs.


Release of these inmates would make 20,000 beds available, allow TDCJ to close idle facilities, and allay the financial burden placed upon TDCJ in handling the escalating health issues of elderly inmates. This much-needed system reformation would also address strategic planning issues.

The greatest risk to society seems to not be the aging prisoner population being housed at taxpayers' expense but the overworked, exhausted officers who are asleep on the job or worse, asleep at the wheel after an 18-hour shift.



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Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. I believe my testimony will prove most beneficial to your review of TDCJ.

Very truly yours,

Gaye B. Weintraub

/gbw

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 2:27:11 AM

Submitted on Thu, 11/14/2024 - 00:55

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

Gaye

Last Name

Weintraub

Email

City

Katy

State

Texas

Your Comments or Concerns

Good afternoon. My name is Gaye Weintraub, and my biological uncle is incarcerated at the Stiles Unit. My testimony focuses on the inadequate staffing and the strain officers endure.

It is a verified fact the officer to inmate ratio is grossly disproportionate. Officers publicly complain they cannot leave their posts until relief arrives, often translating to 16-, 18-, and even 24-hour shifts. Overworked officers often can be found asleep on the job. Sometimes, they may even fall asleep driving home and drift into oncoming traffic, killing themselves and injuring others, as allegedly was the case last Friday morning in Orange.

If legislature revisited and passed House Bill 1064, which stalled in committee last session, red brick units could be closed, and officers could fill vacancies elsewhere. The Good Time Bill gives credit to aggravated offenses and makes eligible for immediate release nearly 20,000 prisoners over the age of 50 who have completed 20 years of their sentences. Statistics show less than four percent of inmates over 50 return to prison. Inmates over 55 account for 15 percent of the total inmate population but one-half of escalating medical costs.

Release of these inmates would free 20,000 beds, allow idle facilities to close, and allay the

financial burden of elderly inmates' escalating health issues. This system reformation would also address strategic planning issues.

The greatest risk to society seems not to be the aging prisoner population housed at taxpayers' expense but the overworked, exhausted officers asleep on the job or worse, asleep at the wheel after an 18-hour shift.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. I believe my testimony will prove most beneficial to your review of TDCJ.

Your Proposed Solution

Revisit and pass House Bill 1064, giving good time credit to aggravated offenses and thereby making eligible for immediate release prisoners over the age of 50 who have completed at least 20 years of their sentences.

Close delapidated red brick buildings, transfer security officers from closed red brick facilities to other units within the prison system, reduce the financial burden TDCJ incurs when addressing elderly inmates' escalating health issues by releasing nearly 20,000 prisoners over the age of 50 who have served at least 20 years of their sentences.

Attachment

[11142024 GBW ltr to Sunset.pdf](#) (293.08 KB)

My Comments Will Be Made Public

Yes