

By: Allen

H.B. No. 1539

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to program accessibility for female inmates of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 501.027, Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 501.027. ACCESS TO PROGRAMS BY FEMALE INMATES. (a) The department shall develop and implement policies that increase and promote a female inmate's access to programs, including self-study programs on parenting, healing from trauma, and financial literacy, offered to inmates in the custody of the department, including programs offered to defendants confined in state jail felony facilities [~~including educational, vocational, substance use treatment, rehabilitation, life skills training, and prerelease programs~~]. The department may not reduce or limit a male inmate's access to a program to meet the requirements of this section.

(b) The department shall develop and implement policies that:

(1) require each facility to make the programs described by Subsection (a) available and accessible to a female inmate not later than the 45th day after the date the inmate arrives at the facility; and

(2) ensure female inmates have the ability to

1 participate in the self-study programs described by Subsection (a),  
2 regardless of the inmate's offense, sentence, mental health record,  
3 or behavior while confined.

4 (c) Not later than December 31 of each year, the department  
5 shall:

6 (1) prepare and submit to the governor, the lieutenant  
7 governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, each  
8 standing committee of the legislature having primary jurisdiction  
9 over the department, and the reentry task force described by  
10 Section 501.098 a written report that includes:

11 (A) a description of any department policies that  
12 were created, modified, or eliminated during the preceding year to  
13 meet the requirements of this section; and

14 (B) a list of programs, including self-study  
15 programs, available to female inmates in the custody of the  
16 department during the preceding year; and

17 (2) publish the report on the department's Internet  
18 website.

19 SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date  
20 of this Act, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice shall develop  
21 and implement the policies necessary to implement the changes in  
22 law made by this Act.

23 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.