

MINUTES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Friday, December 9, 2022

10:00 AM

Capitol Extension, Room E1.016

Pursuant to a notice posted in accordance with Senate Rule 11.10 and 11.18, a public hearing of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice was held on Friday, December 9, 2022, in the Capitol Extension, Room E1.016, at Austin, Texas.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator John Whitmire, Chair
Senator Joan Huffman, Vice Chair
Senator Juan Hinojosa
Senator Robert Nichols

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Paul Bettencourt
Senator Brian Birdwell
Senator Borris Miles

The chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. There being a quorum present, the following business was transacted:

The Chair called the following persons to provide invited and public testimony on the following interim committee charges (see attached witness list):

Illegal Temporary License Plates: Examine and report on the relationship of the unlawful sale and use of temporary paper license plates with crimes related to human trafficking, drug trafficking, theft, and homicide;

Re-entry Programs for Inmates: Review current offender re-entry programs provided by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and county jails, and identify barriers to their success. Make recommendations to enhance successful programs to ensure adequate resources and support for released offenders;

Criminal Case Backlogs: Evaluate the current backlog of criminal cases. Consider and recommend ways to reduce delays and ensure timely resolution of cases, including an examination of methods developed by district attorneys, judges, and court administrators;

Senator Huffman assumed the chair.

Senator Whitmire resumed the chair.

Public Safety: Examine the recent Harris County release from custody of hundreds of criminal defendants onto the streets without bond or review by a magistrate. Identify what caused this threat to public safety in Harris County and determine if it has occurred in any other counties in Texas. Make recommendations to ensure criminal defendants are timely brought before a magistrate for probable cause hearings and bond hearings, and that appropriate bond is set.

Senator Huffman assumed the chair.

Senator Whitmire resumed the chair.

There being no further business, at 2:11 PM Senator Whitmire moved that the Committee stand recessed subject to the call of the chair. Without objection, it was so ordered.

Senator John Whitmire, Chair

Lara Wendler, Chief of Staff/Committee Clerk