

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2831

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COUNTY AFFAIRS

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Hearing Date: April 15, 2021 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

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Linda Logan

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Austin, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony regarding House Bill (HB) 2831. My name is Linda Logan and I am the Senior Public Policy Analyst for the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD), registering on the bill.

TCDD is established by state and federal law and is governed by 27 Governor-appointed board members, 60 percent of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities or family members of individuals with disabilities. The Council's purpose in law is to encourage policy change so that people with disabilities have opportunities to be fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives.

HB 2831 would create an advisory committee to make recommendations on matters related to the confinement in county jail of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Texas has long needed such a review, as it would help to establish a vital network of support for individuals who are often incarcerated as a result of behaviors that are directly related to their disability.

TCDD would like to offer the following recommendations for the bill's language:

Recommendation: As introduced, HB 2831 does not require the advisory committee membership to include an individual with IDD. To better ensure that the IDD perspective is fully incorporated in the work of the group, TCDD recommends expanding the committee to include at least one additional person with lived experience (or, at the very least, one family member of a person with lived experience). This should be in addition to, and not in place of, the bill's current slot for one representative of a statewide organization that advocates for individuals with IDD.

Recommendation: In addition to reviewing existing data and making recommendations to sheriffs and counties regarding the confinement of people with IDD in jails, the committee would be well-positioned and well-qualified to help identify data needs and barriers to communication between jails and other systems, such as the health and human services system. TCDD recommends that this additional directive be provided to the advisory commission, to better inform the required biennial report to state leadership in ways that could be used to further improve the system.

Recommendation: TCDD recommends that the four-hour training in SECTION 3 of the introduced bill be competency based and mandatory, and include a required evaluation by students to be used to assess and improve the curriculum.

Thank you again for your attention to this testimony. As introduced, HB 2831 appears to be consistent with the mission and goals of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities,

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though there are improvements that can be made to increase its effectiveness.

Please do not hesitate to contact TCDD with any questions, or if we can provide any additional assistance.

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