

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 927  
By: Dutton  
Corrections  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

According to Texas Appleseed, more than nine million Texans have a criminal record, substantially diminishing opportunities to obtain employment, advance in careers, access affordable housing, and further education. After completing a sentence, a citizen faces a multitude of penalties and challenges not imposed by any court. A study by the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Section catalogued more than 38,000 statutes that impose collateral consequences on people convicted of crimes, creating barriers to both re-entry and self-sufficiency. More than 80 percent of the statutes operate as a denial of employment opportunities. Although some of these consequences serve important public safety purposes, others create an unnecessary barrier to re-entry and self-sufficing jobs.

As these barriers remain in place, re-entry fails. When re-entry fails, the societal and economic costs add up. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation reported, more than two-thirds of state prisoners are rearrested within three years of their release, and half are reincarcerated. High rates of recidivism mean more crime, more victims, and more pressure on federal, state, and municipal budgets. In the past 20 years, state spending on corrections has grown at a faster rate than nearly all other budget items. Re-entry reforms are underway across the country, with many federal agencies focusing on the re-entry population with initiatives that aim to improve successful outcomes. For Texas, it may be of benefit to evaluate which barriers might be needlessly costly and counterproductive to both crime control and economic growth. H.B. 927 seeks to create a commission to review certain state laws that restrict the rights or activities of persons convicted of a felony offense and to make certain recommendations regarding those laws.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

H.B. 927 creates a nine-member commission for the following purposes:

- evaluating all state laws that restrict the rights or activities of persons convicted of a felony offense, including the right to vote, the right to serve on a grand or petit jury, and eligibility for certain occupational licenses; and

- making recommendations to the legislature regarding the repeal or amendment of laws that are identified as being overly restrictive or not otherwise serving the best interest of justice.

The bill requires the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals to each appoint two commission members and requires the chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court to appoint one member. The bill requires the appointing authorities to ensure that the commission includes judges, legal scholars, and relevant business and governmental interests and to make their appointments not later than the 60th day after the bill's effective date. The bill provides for the commission's presiding officer and meetings and establishes that a member of the commission is not entitled to compensation or reimbursement of expenses.

H.B. 927 requires the commission, not later than November 1, 2024, to report its findings and recommendations to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker, Texas Supreme Court, and Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, including any specific statutes that the commission recommends repealing or amending. The commission is abolished and the bill's provisions expire December 31, 2024.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2023.