

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on County Affairs  
For HB 1282

Compiled on: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 1:42 PM

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Hearing Date: March 22, 2023 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Matt Foster  
Myself  
Allen, TX

A large portion of the veterans that find themselves inside the criminal justice system have either mental health problems—namely PTSD, depression, or high anxiety—or substance-abuse disorders, most notably alcohol or cocaine addiction. According to Dr. Andrea Finlay, a large percentage of these Veterans are also homeless or at-risk for homelessness, and many others face such challenges as finding work and reintegrating into society. Plus, Veterans who collide with the criminal justice system may be at higher risk for suicide. Having the proper training to work with these veterans inside the system can not only create safer more stable corrections system but also help veterans get the help they need.

Mary Reder  
Self  
Plano, TX

I am in favor of this bill

Virginia Simonson, LTC, US Army-Retired  
Texas Council of Chapters, Military Officers Association of America  
Flower Mound, TX

On behalf of our 20,000 + members across the state, I'm writing to voice our full support for HB 1282. The size of the inmate population is the biggest cost driver for county jails, generally costing more than \$60/day per inmate. It makes economic sense to reduce the numbers of inmates and their incarcerated time as long as public safety is not degraded. Better training for county jailers has the potential to reduce costs and public and in-jail safety. Because Veterans may be eligible for a wide range of federal and state services, it is important that jailers identify Veterans. Once identified, trained jailers can refer Veterans to county level services such as Veterans Treatment Court programs, County Veteran Services Officers, TVC Military Veteran Peer Service Coordinators and mental health and substance use services from local behavioral health authorities. These services can then connect Veterans with psychosocial supports and any VA benefits that they may be eligible for. Additionally, since some Veterans have both combat training and conditions such as TBIs and Post Traumatic Stress disorders, they can react aggressively to "routine" jailer instructions that put jailers and Veterans at an increased risk of personal injury. Finally, Veterans have a much higher rate of suicide/suicide ideation than the general public and even a simple arrest for DWI or Public Intoxication could substantially increase the possibility of suicide attempts/completions while in custody. County Jailer training on dealing with trauma affected Veterans, if executed in concert with a coordinated county program bringing Veteran peers, County VSOs and mental health professionals could lead to lowered jail costs and better outcomes for the community and the Veteran (and his/her family).