

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Corrections  
For HB 1708

Compiled on: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 4:03 PM

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Hearing Date: March 28, 2023 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Wanda Ulrey  
self  
Victoria, TX

Vote yes on this bill to require TDCJ units to be consistent with regard to temperatures in the units.

Liberty Lopez  
Myself and my son, Accountant  
San Antonio, TX

I'm speaking out that I support this bill. My son suffers every summer and hit months due to extreme heat and no air conditioning here in Texas.

Sherry Robinson  
Myself  
Woodway, TX

Of course, Texas prisons should be air conditioned. This is Texas!

Mark Anthony Vasquez  
The Statewide Leadership Council  
Weslaco, TX

My name is Mark Anthony Vasquez and I am in favor of HB 1708. I come to you today from the Rio Grande Valley and I speak for so many of us who have been TDCJ residents ourselves and who have loved ones as residents of a TDCJ facility.

Truth is, there are so many of us who are formerly incarcerated and have the shared experiences of being in a TDCJ facility. And, we carry within us what many do not see. I stand in support of HB 1708 because it is a humanitarian concern which calls to us as a society, to ask ourselves if we should permit inhumanity to continue. I feel HB 1708 is the correct response to this question.

Quite frankly - it is the right thing to do.

The Texas heat has contributed to the deaths of so many of those incarcerated and has cost the state of Texas millions of dollars in lawsuits and wrongful death claims that one cannot afford to disregard these truths any longer. That this issue should fall upon the public charge over the bodies of TDCJ residents now long passed and gone is perhaps an apt illustration of the inhumanity altogether. What is the cost? Such a question beckons us as a community to call to mind that a human body has no defined price. Would it not? Such - I propose - were the discussions when in the 87th Legislative year a series of increment measures were passed to install proper cooling units in all TDCJ facilities by 2029. However, this measure failed to see any true application, as lawmakers failed to provide the money and the Senate did not pick up the bill. So, the question still lingers and the subject prevails - cost.

We as formerly-incarcerated and as system-impacted know all too familiar of the varying effects the term - cost - possesses in our lives. For, we have living memories of how this variable manifests itself in real-time - with stifling heat, measures to provide ice and water grow disregarded, medical emergencies due to the heat, and the countless deaths that go unnoticed or undocumented since - as medical professionals have cited - extreme heat is often overlooked or disregarded as a cause of death.

More than two-thirds of the state's TDCJ facilities don't have any particular kind of device to determine temperature or indoor climate control. HB 1708 addresses this concern. Legislative measures in the past have suggested to us that the conversation in our halls of the Capitol have grown concerned, as well. Obviously, there is a professional desire to find remedy to meet these issues. Therefore, I urge our state lawmakers to act. And so I submit my own testimony in favor of HB 1708 because I stand with the thousands of families whose loved ones are TDCJ residents and who know that this is not right and that something needs to be done. I am in favor of HB 1708 because TDCJ facilities need a system of in-house climate control and/or a cooling system. This is the right thing to do and is the best way to address what is a very real humanitarian concern.

John Campbell  
Self  
Austin, TX

This is an excellent bill. It will go a long way toward improving staffing levels in TDCJ units, particularly in the guard ranks. Given a choice between working in an air conditioned Walmart or an non-air conditioned prison facility, TDCJ loses every time.

Shawnee Ray  
System impacted persons  
Fort Worth, TX

The temperatures in housing areas often exceed 136 degrees requiring inmates to sleep on the wetted concrete floor with wet towels coving their bodies. If they were dogs, someone would be charged with abuse. This is inhumane treatment.

Gerald Ray  
Incarcerated inmates  
Fort Worth, TX

AC is not an option in Texas, it is a basic requirement for life and health. People die and get horribly sick from excessive heat.

Vicki White  
Self  
Del Valle, TX

Please vote for temperature regulation and maintaining equipment need for this.

Jennifer Troell  
Self, Company Administrator  
New Braunfels, TX

Dear Corrections Committee Members,  
During the summer months, my husband is faced with two choices.  
1) He can sleep without a blanket and wake up covered in mosquito bites.  
2) He can sleep with a blanket to keep off the mosquitos and wake up covered in heat rash.  
I hope that we can do better than this by putting climate control in place.  
Thank you,  
Jennifer Troell

Tiffany Forristal  
self  
HOUSTON, TX

Help us, FINALLY, put an end to the torture that has existed in Texas for DECADES!! For the last 2 sessions, Texans have asked legislators to enforce the same standard that is required in Texas Jails, maintaining a temperature between 65° to 85°. Can you imagine spending days and nights on end in the heat and humidity, going days without a shower, laying on a concrete floor in your toilet water, hoping for some level of reprieve, or wearing a heavy vest and security equipment with only a warm bottle of water for hours? Legislators of Texas took an oath to protect Texas citizens, but neither prisoner nor employee is being protected. I hope and pray that you realize the unconscionable behavior of allowing people to be tortured by deadly heat conditions must cease. Thank you for your consideration.

Lori Mellinger  
Lioness: Justice Impacted Women's Alliance  
Lockhart, TX

Temperatures inside the majority of TDCJ facilities reach up to 149 degrees in the summer. This is not conducive to safety, rehabilitation or programming in units, much less the toll it takes on the life, health and safety of the residents and of the officers. I fully support this bill to treat people inside -- staff and residents -- as humans. Please help stop cooking human beings.

Yuri Mata  
Self  
Sugar Land, TX

For!

Taylor Trevino  
self - organizer  
Austin, TX

I urge all Representatives to support this bill.

Dawn Runyon, Bd of Directors/Grants,Fundraising,Programs  
Texas C.U.R.E., Inc.  
Magnolia, TX

I am in support of HB1708