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**TREATMENT, REHAB, STRONGER PROBATION AND PAROLE  
TOP SUNSET REVIEW COMMISSION LIST OF PROPOSED REFORMS**

Unless the Legislature embraces rehabilitation programs, Texas' prison overcrowding crisis might never be solved, the Sunset Advisory Commission staff reported in their analysis of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Every 12 years the Sunset Commission evaluates all state agencies to determine if they still serve a purpose or should be "sunsetted" out of commission. Commission staff has released a report recommending many policies that "are targeting the core of the problem and focusing on what will increase public safety," said Ana Yáñez Correa, Executive Director of the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition.

"The report concludes that building prisons without investing in treatment programs is not the most cost-effective or sustainable solution to prison population growth," said Correa. "That's exactly right. We have to change our priorities if our goal is to reduce crime."

Correa noted that Texas' prison building boom is a new phenomena.

"From the time Texas rebelled against Mexico until Ronald Reagan became president," she said, Texas' prison population grew from zero to around 25,000. From 1980 until the GOP took over Texas state government in 2002, the Legislature increased TDCJ's prison capacity by 127,000 beds, she noted, citing TDCJ's Sunset report. "We can't incarcerate our way out of this problem," said Correa. "It's time for a change in direction."

TDJC's Sunset Report recognized what many of us have said for so long," said Correa, "the state's criminal justice efforts may not deter recidivism unless offender rehabilitation needs are properly met." According to the Sunset report:

- If current conditions and projections continue, Texas can expect the prison population to exceed capacity by more than 11,000 beds in less than five years.
- Without adequate resources, TDCJ cannot successfully implement treatment and diversion programs to meet existing needs.

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- Treatment and prison diversion programs have been shown to reduce recidivism and result in savings for the State.
- The Board of Pardons and Paroles should abide by existing parole guidelines (right now they don't) and use proven tools to identify parole candidates who should be for early release.
- The Legislature appropriate significant additional funds to TDCJ for offender treatment and rehabilitation programs proven to reduce recidivism.

Correa said the Sunset review process provides an important opportunity to re-evaluate Texas misplaced criminal justice priorities. "The Sunset Commission looked closely to see what works and doesn't work," she said, "and they said we need greater spending emphasis on rehabilitation programs and stronger supervision of more serious offenders on probation and parole."

"We want to thank the Sunset Commission staff for their hard work on this report," said Correa. "They obviously worked hard to identify options for legislators who may not support endless prison building. Now it's up to the Legislature to decide what to do."