



Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable

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*Building Successful Strategies for
Offender Reentry and Reintegration in Austin/Travis County, Texas*

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City Council Testimony

Thursday – December 15, 2011

I am Jeri Houchins, Administrative Director for the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable. The Roundtable is a robust, community-wide collaborative and catalyst for systemic change. Thank you once again for the opportunity to come before you to address issues related to cost effectively promoting public safety through successful reentry and reintegration of incarcerated, or formerly incarcerated offenders, returning to our community.

For your consideration today is an economic development agreement with the US Farathane Corporation to create 228 jobs which targets individuals who have employment needs and desires but been faced with work barriers as a result of their individual diversity.

The Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable looks forward to collaborating with the Farathane Corporation and other community partners to:

- provide technical assistance on such things as policy and procedures that will help to remove barriers to hiring persons with criminal backgrounds like when the City “moved the criminal background box” from their initial employment application and
- linking Farathane to our significant network of local providers who have employment expertise and specialize in serving this population.

The A/TCRRT is confident that our involvement will:

- advance Farathane's desire to hire the best person for each job rather than prematurely screen individuals out because of their criminal background;
- link reentry stakeholders with an employer receptive to hiring this un-served and underserved population;
- open a door of opportunity for former offenders and their families to obtain and maintain income stability; and,
- remove a barrier to successful reentry for many individuals to not only get a “second chance” but rather a “fresh start”!

In closing, I'd like to personally thank Brian Gildea—Economic Development Manager—as well as Betsy Spencer and Rebecca Giello, from Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, for linking and including the reentry population in this initiative. The Roundtable looks forward to learning more about Farathane and working with them as they remove employment barriers for diverse populations.