



Austin-Travis County Reentry Roundtable

*Building Successful Strategies for
Reentry and Reintegration in Austin/Travis County, Texas*
www.reentryroundtable.org

PLANNING COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, February 13, 2023
12:30-2:00 p.m.
Zoom

Members in attendance: Charles Moody (Chair), Melissa Shearer (Vice Chair), Cynthia Simons (RAP Representative), Sonja Burns, Jennifer Carter, David Clauss, Helen Gaebler, Darwin Hamilton, Cathy McClaugherty, Kaleigh Phelan, Marsha Morgenroth, Hank Perret, Paola Silvestre, Louella Tate, Alex Villarreal

Guests: Leticia Serna (Excel Center), Robert Kingham (DACC), Terra Tucker, Jezzmen McPeters (ECHO), St. Clergy, Kyle Walker (ECHO), Karen Boyd, David Johnson (Grassroots Leadership), Patricia Alford, Usama Malik, Reyda Taylor (FUSE Fellow with Travis County Digital Equity), Julie Guirguis, Shelley MacAllister (Unite Us), Veronica L,

I. 12:30-12:45 p.m. – Welcome

- a. Connecting Activity: [Legislative Session Jamboard](#)
- b. Guest Introductions
- c. Advocacy Fellow Update – Amanda Cassidy-Trejo

Amanda was not able to attend today's meeting. She shared her update via email: Over the past month, I began working on the outline for the RAP Deliverable report. In response to the feedback we have received through surveying the RAP community, we kicked off a new format for RAP. We used a group peer support model I learned in my training last year. I participated in Advocacy Day at the Capitol with Grassroots Leadership and was able to sit down with a group of advocates and Representative Gina Hinojosa. I am brainstorming ideas with the RAP community to put together a symposium in April for the second chance month that will provide resources and workshops that the community would like to see more of such as housing, banking, computer literacy, and entrepreneurship.

II. 12:45-12:55 p.m. – Voting Items

- a. January 2023 Minutes

A motion to approve the January 2023 Minutes was made by Hank Perret and seconded by Cynthia Simons. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote with no abstentions.

- b. Planning Council Nomination: Robert Kingham

A motion to approve Robert Kingham's nomination to the Planning Council was made by Melissa Shearer and seconded by David Clauss. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote with no abstentions.

III. 12:55-1:55 p.m. – Legislative Panel

- a. The panelists introduced themselves: Jennifer Carter (Goodwill Industries of Central Texas), David Johnson (Grassroots Leadership), Cynthia Simons (Texas Center for Justice and Equity), Terra Tucker (Alliance for Safety and Justice)
 - b. Recording of Legislative Panel can be viewed here:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/TSqthOAbXAJiZfhaVT0RFhwQeulYYxLK7Lny1wSAt0srWCTzOxbNNDLorkN91Pt.ofrIK7tBYjehQ6iN?startTime=1676312319000> Passcode: 7Ku9me?X
- Panelists shared policy priorities for their organizations this session:
 - Alliance for Safety and Justice has 3 main priorities this session: bill that expands relocation benefit for survivors of violent crime (HB250/SB49); bill that streamlines and automates nondisclosure orders for those who are eligible (HB1737/SB499); bill regarding work credits for people on parole or probation to shorten supervision periods (Not filed yet). Also part of the Clean Slate Coalition which supports bills related to record sealing.
 - Grassroots Leadership has the focus of redirecting resources from the carceral system to community-based resources. This session, Grassroots Leadership is strongly supporting the Finish the Five Campaign. Grassroots Leadership is taking a lead in campaigning in opposition Operation Lonestar; HJR 63. [Their advocacy platform can be viewed here.](#)
 - Goodwill part of the Smart on Crime Coalition and also focusing on housing, digital equity, and occupational licensing this session. They follow a broad group of issue areas and are currently tracking around 150 bills. For housing bills, they are looking at bills related to not being able to raise the rent for folks in low-income units before the expiration of the lease as well as bills limiting taxes for people who are elderly or disabled. They are also looking at expansion of broadband and digital equity.
 - Texas Center for Justice and Equity is focusing on the Finish the 5 Campaign; expanding women's programming opportunities in prison; parole bill led by Statewide Leadership Council which codifies individualized treatment plan; and emergency plans for people at TDCJ during extreme weather conditions; and diligent participation bill which would automate shortening sentences by 20% for diligent participating in programming where applicable (HB1705 Allen/SB85 Johnson).
 - Terra, Cynthia, and Jennifer are also part of the Smart on Crime Coalition. Some legislative priorities of the Smart on Crime Coalition are:
 - Omnibase Bill: Currently, if you don't show up for your court date or have fines, you receive a hold on your driver's license. These penalties snowball and can take years to pay off, and it puts many people in the likelihood of driving without a valid license. Smart on Crime Coalition are working on reforming these policies. Does not have a bill number yet.
 - Occupational licensing bill (HB1747): After 5 years the licensing board cannot use criminal history against you when considering your licensure, unless you have a conviction for one of the listed exempted offenses.
 - Second Look Bill (HB1362): Lonestar Justice Alliance is leading on this bill this session; allows for people who were convicted for certain crimes at very young ages for life without parole, would be able to be reviewed in a shorter period of time and be reviewed on the rehabilitation efforts made while incarcerated
 - Court backlogs: Bill for text message reminders for court dates was passed last year but not funded, so that funding for OCA to implement that process is a priority this session.
 - Judicial information bill: daily or weekly logs of who is currently in jail

- Data bill: access to court and criminal justice data; ensuring that arrests and convictions are being reported and are accessible
- Reentry Pilot Program: Has been a priority for multiple sessions; finally passed a vocational reentry pilot program but are working on funding this session

Other bills that may be of interest to Reentry Roundtable:

- Bills relating to air conditioning at TDCJ: HB 1708, HB1355 Sherman, HB1213 Rosenthal
- Post-release housing bill: HB965 Allen
- Compassionate release program; HB1629 Woo, HB305 Johnson
- Limits on Solitary confinement: HB4080, HB812, HB813
- Second Look: HB1862
- Law party bills: HB1736 and HB929

Questions:

- Quiana Fisher: Any bills we will need to play defense on?
 - Enhancement bills, Look out for bills that advance penalties
 - Reentry is a hyperlocal issue; look for preemptive bills
- Cynthia can loop in interested persons to the Texas Women's Justice Coalition
 - Patricia Alford and Helen Gaebler are interested
- Helen is interested in hearing more about the Reentry Pilot Program:
 - Persons with nonviolent offenses directed to a vocational program and job placement while being on supervision; stipend for soft skills training
 - Goodwill has been awarded one of the pilot positions but it has not gotten off the ground; can reach out to Jen for more information
 - Suggestion: Information about the pilot can go through public defender offices; Texas indigent defense commission will have list of all public defender offices in the state; have attorneys ask for this program for their clients
- Sonja asked if there is a plan to add youth beds to hospitals as part of the Finish the 5 campaign. Cynthia would like to connect with Sonja about this to connect her with the TCJE advocacy team.

IV. 1:50-2:00 p.m. –Member Updates & Announcements

- [Mobilize sign-up link](#) and [user guide](#)
- BPUSA will be introducing a new workforce development initiative in collaboration with Indeed that is peer-based and incentives that focuses on getting folks returning home from prison "workforce ready". We're also beginning the planning for HIRE 2. Finally, BPUSA in collaboration with Via Hope will begin its Peer Apprenticeship Program. We also have two peer support specialists getting their required hours for their state certification.
- [Demetria McCain from HUD will come to UT Law School as a speaker on Feb 23](#)

NEXT MEETING

Monday, March 6, 2022

12:30 – 2 p.m.

Zoom

Note: The March Planning Council meeting will be held on the first Monday of the month to avoid AISD Spring Break