



Statewide Leadership Council

SYSTEM-IMPACTED LEADERS
TRANSFORMING JUSTICE IN TEXAS

Sponsored by Texas Center for Justice & Equity



WINTER 2023

ISSUE 2

IN THIS ISSUE

What is the Statewide Leadership Council?

Policy Priorities

A Message from Lori

Clean Slate Texas

What is the Statewide Leadership Council?

The **Statewide Leadership Council** (SLC) is a group of Texans who are formerly incarcerated, on probation or parole, or family members of people in the prison system. We are committed to ending incarceration in this state.

Texas's INjustice system harms us, our families, and our communities. When legislators are making decisions about people impacted by the INjustice system, we deserve to be heard. We are claiming our right to be included — and to be leaders — during conversations and decisions about prison, probation, parole, and the need for supports to help us and our families live successfully.

The SLC is sponsored by the **Texas Center for Justice and Equity** (TCJE), which works statewide at the Texas legislature and in various counties to end mass incarceration and build safe, healthy Texas communities. SLC participants join monthly meetings where we provide advocacy training resources and build a community together.

Join us!

Visit: www.TexasCJE.org/statewide-leadership-council

Contact: Maggie Luna,
MLuna@TexasCJE.org

1714 Fortview Rd. Ste. 104
Austin, TX 78704

Our Policy Priorities

The Statewide Leadership Council has **3 top priorities for 2023**:

- **Common-sense parole**, which would give people earlier access to programming – like substance use treatment and cognitive intervention – prior to their parole review.
- An **emergency management plan** for storms, pandemics, and other events in Texas prisons to ensure that incarcerated people have the support and supplies needed to make it through declared disasters without experiencing inadequate or dangerous conditions.
- Criminal **record-clearing reforms**, called Clean Slate and New Wings, which would expand access to orders of nondisclosure for certain offenses, as well as automate the process in certain instances.

Dates of Interest for the 88th Legislature

Tuesday, January 10th: The first day of the 88th Regular Session.

Tuesday, January 17th: Inauguration.

Friday, March 10th: 60-day deadline for bill filing.

Monday, May 29th: The last day of 88th Regular Session (sine die).

A Message from Lori

Lori Mellinger, Statewide Leadership Council Steering Committee Member

I walked out of prison on September 10, 2015, but I never really left it behind. Incarceration changed me in all sorts of ways, but I knew that I would never leave the experience behind completely. So, when the opportunity came to me to join the Statewide Leadership Council back in January 2020, I dove in with full force.

Until then, I had been exclusively working in direct service for a faith-based transitional housing program where I was honored to work with hundreds of women coming from incarceration, too. SLC opened a new world to me of legislative work where the scope was broader than what I had previously done.

[continued on following page]

Continued: A Message From Lori



Last month I left direct service completely. For two years I worked back behind the walls for a volunteer program inside. An expert on both incarcerated women and the complex needs of women's reentry, I stepped away with mixed feelings. I am grateful and honored to have worked with close to 1000 women – in and out of prison, but I am free now to speak on what is so fundamentally flawed within TDCJ and all systems of its kind.

I believe that people leave incarceration one of three ways: 1. You walk out of those doors and leave the entire experience behind you. 2. You leave with what I call a “boss man mentality,” where you are almost apologetic for it all. You treat the system like disappointed parents that you now hope to one day make proud. You rely on the unit bosses to pat you on the head and say “well done.” And while there is nothing inherently wrong with either of those choices, I chose: 3. You leave the system but you never leave the experience completely behind you, instead working for systematic change.

When I was where you are now, I had no idea that anyone was fighting for me. I want you all to know that we are. Our numbers, just like the numbers of people across the nation with a criminal record (one-third if you're curious) are growing. And when we show up – and rest assured we do – at the state legislature to fight for change, they know us.

This session we are fighting for some specific things: a common sense parole bill where you all can have ownership of your ITP and know exactly what is necessary for you to make parole as well as having access to the classes the system deems will “rehabilitate” you; emergency planning, where you will be kept safe from conditions such as heat or natural disasters with someone with lived experience involved in that planning; and “new wings” where all of you inside and all of us out here have a path towards non-disclosure one day so that those collateral consequences such as barriers to housing and employment come to an end once we “pay our debt” to society.

So what can you do where you are? Ask your friends and family to join the fight. The SLC is open to anyone with system impact – direct or indirect. You can tell your friends and family to find us online at: <https://www.texascje.org/statewide-leadership-council>.

We tell our stories with pride; we are not ashamed of where we have been. We want the same for you, too.

Clean Slate Texas

Clean Slate Texas is a coalition of community and advocacy organizations (including the Texas Center for Justice and Equity), business and faith leaders, directly impacted people, and families dedicated to expanding access to record clearing so that people with previous involvement in the criminal legal system can get housing, employment, education, and more without facing a lifetime of discrimination.

To stay up to date with the work of Clean Slate Texas, sign up for [email updates here](https://www.cleanslatetexas.org/sign-up) (<https://www.cleanslatetexas.org/sign-up>), and follow them on [Twitter](#) (@CleanSlateTexas) and [Facebook](#) ([facebook.com/CleanSlateTexas](https://www.facebook.com/CleanSlateTexas)).

2022: A year in photos

