

SUBJECT: Requiring TDCJ to provide documentation to certain inmates upon release

COMMITTEE: Corrections — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — White, Allen, Bailes, Bowers, Dean, Morales, Neave, Sherman,
Stephenson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Lauren Johnson, ACLU of Texas; Mia Hutchens, Texas Association of Business; Allison Franklin and Reginald Smith, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition; Kaycie Alexander, Texas Public Policy Foundation; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Cynthia Humphrey, Association of Substance Abuse Programs; Pamela Brubaker, Austin Justice Coalition; Jeff Heckler, Faith Presbyterian Church of Austin; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Cate Graziani, Grassroots Leadership and Texas Advocates for Justice; Kathleen Mitchell, Just Liberty; Jamaal Smith, City of Houston Mayor's Office; Julia Egler, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Texas; John McCord, National Federation of Independent Business; Kaden Norton, Prison Fellowship Ministries; Russell Schaffner, Tarrant County; Sue Gabriel, Texas Advocates for Justice; Rene Lara, Texas AFL-CIO; Penny Rayfield, Texas Association of Business; Lori Henning, Texas Association of Goodwills; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Kathryn Freeman, Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission; Michael Barba, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Cheri Siegelin, Texas Correctional Employees-Huntsville; Emily Gerrick, Texas Fair Defense Project; Charlie Malouff, Texas Inmate Families Association; Ryan Skrobarczyk, Texas Nursery and Landscape Association; Amite Duncan, Texas Prisons Air Conditioning Advocates; Jason Vaughn, Texas Young Republicans; Alexis Tatum, Travis County Commissioners Court; Darwin Hamilton; Carl F. Hunter II; Maria Person; Laurie Pherigo; Sandra Wolff)

Against — None

On — April Zamora, Texas Department of Criminal Justice; (*Registered,*

but did not testify: Karen Keith)

BACKGROUND: Government Code sec. 497.094 requires the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to implement job training programs for inmates and to establish permanent records for each inmate, defendant, or released individual detailing the types of job training provided. The department is required to provide a copy of the record to each inmate, defendant, or released individual upon release.

Government Code sec. 497.095 requires TDCJ to establish permanent records for each inmate in a facility operated by or under contract with the department that participates in a department work program. These records must describe the types of work performed by the inmate, defendant, or released individual and contain a performance evaluation and work attendance record. TDCJ is required to provide a copy of these records to an inmate, defendant, or released individual upon release.

Government Code sec. 501.0165 requires TDCJ to determine if an inmate has a valid drivers license or a valid personal identification certificate prior to release. If an inmate does not have one of these documents, the department must submit a request to the Department of Public Safety on behalf of the inmate for the applicable document.

Interested parties have suggested that the lack of basic identifying information is a significant barrier to inmates obtaining employment upon release and argue that assisting in providing this documentation could help former inmates gain employment, support the Texas economy, and reduce recidivism rates.

DIGEST: CSHB 918 would require TDCJ to provide an inmate discharged or released on parole, mandatory supervision, or conditional pardon with relevant documentation to assist the inmate in obtaining post-release employment, including a copy of the inmate's job training and work records.

For inmates who had completed a prerelease program required by a parole

panel, TDCJ would have to provide a resume that included any trade learned by the inmate and the level of proficiency at that trade, and documentation that the inmate had completed a practice job interview.

An inmate could receive this assistance in obtaining employment if the inmate's intended residence was in Texas and the inmate was deemed able to work by the department.

TDCJ also would have to determine if the inmate had a certified copy of the inmate's birth certificate and a copy of the inmate's Social Security card. If the inmate did not have one of these documents, TDCJ would be required to submit a request to the appropriate entity on behalf of the inmate for the applicable document. This request would have to be submitted as soon as practicable to enable TDCJ to provide the inmate with the applicable document upon discharge or release.

The provisions concerning personal identification documents would not apply to an inmate who was not legally present in the United States or was not a resident of the state before being placed in the custody of TDCJ.

The bill would take effect January 1, 2020.