



## 2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Over three days in November 2019, nearly 60 formerly incarcerated women, advocates, and service providers from across Texas gathered at Mo-Ranch for the first-ever Texas Women's Dignity Retreat. The goal of this retreat was to celebrate the incredible progress made during the 2019 legislative session, build community, and gather together for a visioning session where we exchanged ideas and hammered out shared priorities for the future of women's justice in Texas.



Ninety percent of the visioning session participants had direct experience with the justice system and 55 percent were crime survivors. Their combined lived experience provided the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition with a tremendous amount of insight into the needs and policy priorities of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, and together we developed the following 2021 legislative agenda:

- 1. Community Resources:** Reduce corrections spending and pivot funding towards communities so that they can develop localized approaches to public health and safety, which will address the root causes of system involvement and reduce incarceration.
- 2. Primary Caretaker:** Take primary caretaker status into consideration during sentencing to keep mothers united with their families.
- 3. Drug Reform:** Lower penalties for minor drug offenses so more people can take drug-related educational courses or engage in community service rather than be incarcerated.
- 4. Independent Oversight:** Establish an Office of the Independent Ombudsman (OIO) for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to provide oversight of grievances and ensure compliance with all federal and state laws.
- 5. Second Look:** End de-facto life sentences for people under 18 by ensuring that all such individuals are eligible for parole after, at most, 20 years served (also referred to as "Second Look").
- 6. Law of Parties:** End Texas' overly broad "Law of Parties," an accomplice law that holds a person criminally responsible for a felony committed by someone else—even if there was no intent to commit that particular felony, and even if that felony occurred accidentally—but it arose out of another offense that the person knew was taking place.
- 7. Good Time Credits:** Expand individuals' ability to earn time off their period of incarceration through "good conduct time" credits (credits for good behavior, diligence in prison work, and attempts at rehabilitation).
- 8. Reentry Support:** Provide relief from the collateral consequences of a criminal record by continuing to remove occupational licensing restrictions, expanding access to expunctions and orders of nondisclosure, and providing pathways to de-registration for those convicted of a sex-related offense.

