



COUNTY COURT AT LAW NO. 5

Fort Bend County, Texas

TEANA V. WATSON

Judge

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April 26, 2022

TO: OJJDP Administrator

RE: Letter of Commitment for Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP FY 2022) – Second Chance Act Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children (O-OJJDP-2022-171233)

As the Presiding Judge of County Court at Law No. 5 and the Fort Bend Juvenile Board Chair, I am pleased to write this letter in support of the Fort Bend County (“FBC”) proposal to the OJJDP for funding under the FY 2022 *Second Chance Act Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children*. FBC is one of the fastest growing counties (population of approximately 850,000); and one of the most ethnically diverse counties in all of America. As the population increases, so does the number of children and families involved in our justice system. We know that without services and support, the incarcerated parents and their children are more likely to become involved in justice system and have poorer outcomes, including educational, mental health, and substance abuse issues.

We support Fort Bend County Behavioral Health Services’ application to develop and implement a coordinated system for the provision of programs and services that support the needs of incarcerated parents and their children. We understand and support this endeavor to reduce crime and recidivism, while improving outcomes for the children of incarcerated parents by mitigating the adverse effects of parental incarceration and providing services to support the parent-child relationship. This program would build on the work previously begun in FBC by the Sheriff’s Office, BHS department, courts, juvenile probation department, behavioral health providers, and many others to reduce the number of individuals in our in our justice system and also to connect them to the needed services.

FBC has a long history of working with other county partners to address the needs of children and adults involved in our legal system. The requested funding would provide a significant opportunity to focus and intervene on a much “at risk” population, mitigate the negative impact of having a parent incarcerated, enhance a parent’s ability and responsibility to care for their children, and to break the intergenerational cycle of criminality.

We are pleased to be a partner and participant to support this endeavor that clearly addresses a significant gap in current systems and services.

Sincerely,

Judge Teana V. Watson

Presiding Judge, County Court at Law No. 5

Fort Bend County Juvenile Board Chair