

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM CAUCUS

CHAIRS

Joe Moody
Jeff Leach



VICE CHAIRS

James White
Victoria Neave

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

September 20, 2021

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428 | Austin, TX 78711-2428

re: "Second Look" for the Third Called Session

Dear Governor Abbott:

We write to ask you to add legislation similar to the regular session's House Bill 686, known as the "Second Look" bill, to the call for the special session that begins today.

H.B. 686 was passed by a bipartisan supermajority of the Texas Legislature during the regular session. It would have applied to certain juveniles certified to stand trial as adults and allowed your appointees on the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to review those youthful offenders for parole earlier than under current law and with a new set of criteria suggested by our courts (based on scientific developments in adolescent brain development) that recognize that someone who commits a crime at age 15 may be a very different person at age 35.

You vetoed the bill on June 18th, saying that while it "admirably recognizes the potential for change and encourages rehabilitation and productiveness in the young offender population," its language conflicted with jury instructions required by the Code of Criminal Procedure and could cause disparate results in parole eligibility. "Further changes to address these issues will allow meaningful reform on this important matter," you concluded, "and I look forward to working with the House author to accomplish that goal."

We are prepared to address those issues immediately. Since the bill is aimed at rightsizing penalties and promoting rehabilitation for people locked up since an early age, time is literally ticking away for them, day by day and year by year, as we work on these technical fixes.

With your help, we do not need to wait for the next regular session to provide these youthful offenders with the opportunities and incentives our system needs. We can extend that grace to them right now.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM CAUCUS

CHAIRS

Joe Moody
Jeff Leach



VICE CHAIRS

James White
Victoria Neave

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you on this issue during this special session and implement these desperately needed reforms. If you add this bill to the call, we will do everything we possibly can—working tirelessly with you and your staff along with our Senate counterparts—to send a bill to your desk that you will be proud, confident, and eager to sign.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Moody".

JOE MOODY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Leach".

JEFF LEACH