

# Prison Higher Education

Bills to improve employment and reduce recidivism

TX2036

## Higher education for incarcerated Texans is a proven strategy that has historically been underutilized in Texas prisons. That will now change.

Even though **higher education programs** for incarcerated individuals are known to **reduce recidivism and improve post-release employment outcomes**, the number of incarcerated Texans enrolled in these programs **declined 50% between 2011 - 2021**.

A 2024 report by Sunset Advisory Commission found that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) **lacked data and couldn't effectively administer** postsecondary education programs.

By April 2024, the number of incarcerated Texans **waitlisted** for associate and bachelor-level programs **outnumbered those enrolled 4 to 1**.

## The 2025 Texas Legislative Session overhauls prison education, improving workforce readiness upon release to address recidivism

The Legislature enhanced the post-release workforce readiness of incarcerated Texans by passing several key measures that can make Texas a national model for addressing recidivism through education.

### Improving Prison Higher Education Management

SB 2405 by Sen. Parker & Rep. Canales

Transfers authority over postsecondary education programs from TDCJ to Windham School District, the agency responsible for academic and career and technical education for Texas' adult correctional population

### Pre-Release Occupational Licensing

SB 1080 by Sen. West & Rep. Cook

Permits incarcerated Texans who have been through education and training to earn a provisional occupational license before their release, improving their odds of getting a high-quality job

### Improved Data-Sharing among Ed & Workforce Agencies

SB 2405 (cont.)

Improves the workforce alignment of credentials and provides transparency and accountability of results by linking prison data with education and workforce data

### Free Dual Credit for Incarcerated Students

SB 1786 by Sen. Creighton & Rep. VanDeaver

Allows incarcerated students in Windham School District to take free dual credit courses while completing high school programming

### Oversight & Evaluations to Improve Programs

SB 2405 (cont.)

Requires regular evaluations of postsecondary programs, bringing together stakeholders, experts and agencies for a continuous improvement process.

### Effective Use of Postsecondary Funding

SB 1 by Sen. Huffman & Rep. Bonnen

Ensures that funds for prison-based postsecondary programs go to directly benefit students instead of administration

For questions, please contact



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