

## CENTER *for* PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

TO: Conference Committee on SB 1

### Senate Conferees

The Honorable Jane Nelson, Chair  
The Honorable Juan Hinojosa  
The Honorable Joan Huffman  
The Honorable Lois Kolkhorst  
The Honorable Charles Schwertner, MD

### House Conferees

The Honorable John Zerwas, MD  
The Honorable Trent Ashby  
The Honorable Sarah Davis  
The Honorable Larry Gonzales  
The Honorable Oscar Longoria

**The Center for Public Policy Priorities respectfully requests the conferees on SB 1 (Appropriations bill) to include adequate funding to implement HB 2702, the Sandra Bland Act.** Sandra Bland, an African American woman from Illinois, committed suicide while in a Texas jail three days after she was arrested for failing to signal a lane change in 2015. This legislation honors her memory and our shared commitment to preventing future avoidable tragedies.

If funded, this important legislation will address many of the issues related to individuals in need of mental health and substance use disorder services in county jails, as identified by the House Committee on County Affairs during the interim, and explored by the House Select Committee on Mental Health.

The steps called for in HB 2702 would improve law enforcement interactions with persons detained, arrested, or in jail to detect and address suspected mental health issues. These steps will require counties to incur some new costs, especially in our smaller counties.

**We respectfully request that funds be appropriated to the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in the amount of \$1 million for the biennium to provide funding for these expenditures.** Establishing a stronger foundation for the treatment of Texans with mental health needs when they interact with law enforcement will not only save lives, but also save communities money in both the near and long term. We urge you to ensure the resources are available to allow our counties to solidify that foundation.

Sincerely,

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