

# End the

# Texans

## Against Solitary Confinement



**"Texas is a leader in the use of prolonged solitary confinement. More than 500 prisoners there have served more than 10 years in almost total isolation, and 138 have served more than 20." - The New York Times**

**"CHARLES DICKENS WAS REVOLTED BY WHAT HE SAW WHILE TOURING AN AMERICAN PENITENTIARY IN 1842, WRITING, "I HOLD THIS SLOW AND DAILY TAMPERING WITH THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRAIN TO BE IMMEASURABLY WORSE THAN ANY TORTURE OF THE BODY."**

**Solitary Confinement is cruel, unnecessary, and harmful. It hurts the people in prison now and hurts our families and communities later.**

### **What is solitary confinement?**

Solitary confinement can be called many things, but all share the same features of at least 22 hours a day confined alone. Cells are often 9 feet long and 6 feet wide. Solitary can be called administrative segregation, restrictive housing, administrative lock up, or protective custody.

### **How big is the problem?**

Over 3,000 people are held in solitary confinement in Texas right now.

- Nearly 1,000 people have been in solitary confinement for more than six years.
- Texas is a leader in the use of prolonged solitary confinement. More than 500 prisoners there have served more than 10 years in almost total isolation, and 138 have served more than 20
- A higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino people are held in solitary than other race/ethnicity groups.
- Every person on Texas death row is held in solitary confinement.

Death row prisoners in Texas spend an average of 17 years and 7 months confined alone in their cells until the State of Texas executes them.

**"ISOLATION SHATTERS THE MIND AND CORRUPTS THE SOUL, AND BREEDS A DARKNESS THAT EVEN THE LIGHT OF JESUS CHRIST STRUGGLES TO DIMINISH"**

**CHRISTOPHER GUFFEY, HELD IN SOLITARY IN TEXAS FOR 16 YEARS**

### **Why is solitary confinement a problem?**

The United Nations defines indefinite or prolonged solitary confinement as torture. Solitary confinement has long-lasting physical and mental consequences.

- Three decades of research consistently finds that solitary confinement, even for a few days, has terrible consequences for people, including sleep disturbances, heightened levels of anxiety and panic; irritability, aggression, and rage; cognitive dysfunction, hyper-sensitivity to stimuli, and hallucinations and PTSD
- 11% of all suicides in Texas prisons are from people held in solitary confinement though people in solitary represent 3% of the total population.
- 95% of people in Texas prisons will return to the community and to their families
- Approximately 477,000 children in Texas have experienced the incarceration of one parent.
- Parents in solitary confinement are cut off from contact with their children leading to increased harm to the parent-child relationship.
- Solitary confinement increases the risk of premature death, even after release.
- A recent study by the University of North Carolina found that people who spent any time in restrictive housing were 24% more likely to die in the first year after release compared to people released who had not spent time in solitary.

### **What changes do we want?**

- End the blanket use of solitary confinement for people in so-called Security Threat Groups. Status-based segregation is inappropriate.
- Behavior-based segregation should be limited to only the time necessary to reduce the risk of harm to the individuals involved or others. Solitary confinement of months and years is inappropriate and deeply harmful.
- End the practice of automatic solitary confinement for people on Texas Death Row.

## **#HaveASoulEndTheHole**

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## **What bills should we support?**

- **HB 480 by Rep. Meza**

**TDCJ cannot place people in administrative segregation solely based on association with a Security Threat Group (STG). If administrative segregation is deemed necessary because the person represents an immediate security threat, the decision to place in restrictive custody must be revisited weekly to determine if the threat remains.**

- **HB 812 by Rep. Meza**

**Limits administrative segregation to 3 days for misconduct and ten days for injury to another person.**

- **HB 813 by Rep. Meza**

**Requires TDCJ, in coordination with the Health and Human Services Commission and the Department of State Health Services, to conduct a study on the impacts of administrative segregation in TDCJ facilities to be submitted on Dec 1, 2024.**

## **What else can we do?**

- **TDCJ has the power to end solitary confinement through administrative policy change. They don't have to wait for the legislature to act. Speak out and ask TDCJ to change these policies.**
- **Refuse budget authorizations for new facilities that would include spaces for administrative segregation/solitary confinement.**
- **Visit TDCJ facilities in your community and learn more about the confinement practices of those facilities.**

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