



For Immediate Release
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**Statement from Juvenile Justice Initiative Director for the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition on the 2008
*Kids Count Essay on Juvenile Justice***

Austin, TX—The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition applauds the 2008 Kids Count Essay “A roadmap for Juvenile Justice Reform” for its diligent effort to provide the tools necessary for change in Texas. The progress toward the vision of a nationally-renowned juvenile corrections system has been slow despite major restructuring legislation which was passed in 2007 to reform the Texas Youth Commission (TYC).

We support the direction of the current leadership, and urge policymakers to continue to support TYC’s current direction towards adopting evidence-based best practices. However, we are concerned that the provision of the reform bill which reduced the maximum age of youth in TYC from 21 to 19 could result in more young people being certified as adults.

Texas must move away from its over-reliance on secure confinement of youth at every level in the system—from pre-adjudication to post-disposition. Too few state resources are expended on community-based interventions, despite the fact that such interventions cost less and are generally more successful than secure confinement.

As lawmakers consider allocating additional resources to local juvenile probation systems in order to divert youth from the state juvenile corrections system, it is critical that increased state funding comes with increased accountability. As long as our juvenile justice systems – state or local – rely on incarceration settings as the primary delivery system for rehabilitative programming, Texas will continue to see problems with abuse, neglect and high recidivism rates. Instead, we must focus on developing more evidence-based programs at the local level that to involve families and communities in the rehabilitation and transition process. The State of Texas should support those innovative, local jurisdictions that are looking beyond the cell for ways to effectively rehabilitate youth who offend in the community, while promoting public safety.

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The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition is committed to identifying and working towards real solutions to the problems facing Texas’ criminal justice system by educating a broad range of supporters using data-driven policy analysis, partnering with organizations and associations that share our core beliefs, and

promoting evidence-based criminal justice solutions that embody the principles of effective management, accountability, public safety, and human and civil rights.