

1 administrators, sheriffs, chiefs of police, you
2 know. The people that are heads of the state wide
3 systems, obviously, are very aware of the very
4 issues, but there are over 3,000 jails in the
5 United States that are county jails. And if you
6 start talking about the city lock-ups and
7 facilities, you could probably add another 15 to
8 20,000 facilities, and these people are not being
9 reached.

10 I commend you for the actions that you have
11 taken thus far and I look forward to continuing to
12 work with you. Thank you.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much,
14 Ms. Frasier. Mr. Dretke?

15 MR. DRETKE: Yes. Thank you very much
16 for the opportunity to be here with you today and
17 to visit, Chairman and Commissioners.

18 I'm Doug Dretke, the director of the
19 Correctional Institutions Division of the Texas
20 Department of Criminal Justice. And correctional
21 institutions are all of our prison facilities
22 within the TECJ.

1 My comments today as those before me are
2 focused on the hiring, recruiting and retention of
3 our correctional staff. Within the very difficult
4 dynamics of our correctional environment, I first
5 wanted to give you a little bit of the sense of the
6 size. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice, we
7 house over 151,000 offenders at 106 different
8 facilities around the state of Texas. Ninety-four
9 of them are state operated facilities. I am
10 authorized 26,000 correctional officers with which
11 today I have just under 24,000, meaning I have a
12 shortage of over 2,000 correctional officers within
13 the state of Texas within our facilities.

14 So, as I begin to talk about this, and the
15 challenges of recruiting, hiring, retention, I
16 wanted to begin with addressing our size. And
17 we've heard this morning some discussion about
18 recruiting and the screening process and all of
19 those very, very important and critical processes.
20 At the same time, things are very different for
21 different jurisdictions.

22 I thought I would highlight one very

1 interesting thing that occurred in our system two
2 years ago. We added a physical agility test to our
3 hiring process, our recruiting, screening and
4 hiring process that we felt was essential. We
5 developed a physical agility test that was very
6 particular to the things that a correctional
7 officer may encounter in the performance of their
8 duties.

9 We had such a significant drop in the number of
10 applications not in our pass/fail because it was
11 not that rigorous of a test, but just the fact that
12 we began a physical agility test and we posted that
13 in all of our advertisements with the Texas
14 workforce and all the types of things we do to
15 recruit, our application pool dropped so
16 significant that we had to make a very, very quick
17 decision to kill it and acquit it. Because we
18 already were dealing with a substantial shortage,
19 we could not handle a shortage driving or going
20 that deep.

21 What we feel we learned, and I think that we
22 must recognize, that much of our workforce finds

1 their way into our profession just looking for a
2 job. I think we've heard it commented that not
3 many of us raised our hands and said I'm off to
4 college, I want to become a correctional officer.
5 I am a little bit of an anomaly to that, but I was
6 fairly alone in that choice. And what I think it
7 does, it doesn't -- it sharpens our focus and
8 particularly in some of the things that I'll talk
9 about in Texas on as we hire staff that what our
10 tremendous obligation and challenge is in training
11 our staff and then in setting up all of the
12 appropriate protocols and processes to ensure that
13 they can be successful in working in a prison
14 environment. And absolutely many of the men and
15 women who find their way into our system to become
16 correctional officers truly become outstanding
17 professionals within our field.

18 Our salaries. We face a lot of the very
19 same challenges that a lot of our counterparts and
20 the sheriff mentioned, a number of them. Many of
21 our facilities are in very rural areas. Our
22 salaries, starting salary, is \$22,000 at it's

1 highest point in after eight years. We have a
2 number of steps that a correctional officer can go
3 through. It reaches approximately 36,000.

4 In our prisons that are in our Metropolitan
5 areas, certainly that's not a very strong or
6 competitive salary, as well as it's not strong
7 enough to cause people to move into our rural areas
8 from, maybe, Metropolitan areas.

9 The other dynamic in Texas is that we have a
10 very low unemployment rate today. When the
11 construction industry, when the oil industry and
12 things like that are strong, as they are in Texas
13 today, that also has an impact on us with our
14 applicant pool and even officers that work for us,
15 some of them going back into the jobs or the
16 professions that they came from when those
17 industries weren't doing as well.

18 So as we focus then on those officers that we
19 do hire, I think I want to begin by highlighting
20 that the Prison Rape Elimination Act has had, I
21 believe, a significant and a positive impact on
22 sharpening our focus upon our culture and the

1 environment that our staff work within and our
2 offenders live within. And I feel a little bit
3 repetitive because I think every panel group that
4 you've had here today, as well as my peers here
5 today, we all very quickly move our comments into
6 the environment and the culture of our facilities.

7 In Texas, very similar to Ohio, and I am not
8 shy about saying many of the good things that we
9 have done, we have stolen from the wonderful state
10 of Ohio. We have developed a safe prison program
11 that has, again, many of the very same components
12 as Direct Wilkinson talked about.

13 The safe prison program is a vehicle to cause
14 positive change in our prison environment. It's a
15 comprehensive approach to prevent offender on
16 offender sexual assaults, physical assaults and
17 extortion. It includes our safe prison plan, which
18 is a comprehensive set of policies and procedures
19 in providing guidance and preventing, detecting,
20 responding to and investigating sexual assault in
21 life endangerment claims and extortion.

22 We actually have a safe prison program group

1 of staff who work in our headquarters centrally who
2 have the responsibility of program oversight and
3 implementation throughout our state, our state
4 facilities. And we have, on a number of our
5 facilities, full time units, say prison program
6 coordinators, and at our smaller facilities we have
7 staff that serve that same function, but they serve
8 in a collateral function.

9 Our comprehensive approach to truly impact our
10 environment, though, begins with our training. So
11 right at our preservice training, our safe prison
12 programs, beginning to talk about sexual assault,
13 we, like probably most jurisdictions, have used the
14 National Institute of Corrections' training tapes
15 that have been put together that provide oversight
16 and insight into the dynamics of sexual assault.

17 We have a significant focus on our Safe Prison
18 Program, immediately in our preservice I think the
19 sheriff very accurately talked about then when you
20 begin the training, you must continue the training.
21 It's also a component in our inservice training.
22 And probably very significantly we recognize the

1 impact of the supervisors, especially our first
2 line and our mid-level supervisors.

3 An approach to deal with all the dynamics of
4 sexual assaults absolutely starts with the top
5 down. Often, though, in communicating all the way
6 down in our paramilitary organizations, you can
7 often hit stumbling blocks as you go down through
8 your mid-levels ranks down to your first line
9 supervisor.

10 I think we heard, and I can't remember if it
11 was one of the Commissioner's comments or the one
12 of the panelist, who talked about our officers come
13 out of training schools pumped, ready to go, on
14 focus, on sharpen, and they get into prisons and
15 the dynamic can often be from a ten-year
16 correctional officer or even a staff member or a
17 supervisor, forget everything you learned. Now
18 we'll teach you the real world. Dynamic that we
19 want to hit head on.

20 And last year, we began our very first
21 sergeant academy. I'm not proud to say that for
22 many years when we promoted our first sergeant from

1 a correctional officer, we had a little penning
2 ceremony up in the front office, put chevrons on
3 their shoulders and told them to go to work and
4 expected that they all of a sudden knew what to do.

5 Well, we started last year where we bring in
6 every brand new sergeant before they can assume
7 their duties, and they go through a 12-day very
8 aggressive, very intensive, academy in which it
9 focuses on leadership, focuses on policy, but,
10 again, our Safe Prison Program is a significant
11 piece of that. And I am very excited about what
12 our sergeant academy will do for our system over
13 time.

14 And then we've implemented it into our
15 mid-level leadership program, which is focused on
16 our captains all the way up to our wardens. So we
17 attempted to very strongly place all the focuses
18 that PREA demands in place throughout our training
19 from top to bottom.

20 We, along with many jurisdictions, were also
21 able to receive a grant through PREA and very
22 comprehensive focus that we outline what we use it

1 for. But there are two particular strategies that
2 I want to highlight that we have used the grant to
3 help us develop. The first is developing an
4 assessment tool based off the model of the
5 institutional character profile that the Federal
6 Bureau of Prison uses. They refer to it as an ICP.

7 We went through a number of meetings with the
8 Federal Bureau of Prison. We learned about their
9 process. We were able to acquire an NIC grant to
10 go and actually observe it. And then we adapted it
11 to our state and our system and we call it the UCP,
12 the Unit Cultural Profile.

13 It is a tool that actually includes in its
14 assessment actual interviews with staff and with
15 offenders about safety, what are their safety
16 concerns, do they have safety concerns on the
17 facility, staff morale issues, communication,
18 shortcomings and so forth. And what we are
19 attempting to utilize this tool for is to first
20 provide the warden with insight, what's happening
21 on their facility, what are some of the focuses
22 they need. From a systems perspective, it will

1 help us develop further training models, further
2 oversight models and further accountability models
3 that we need to continue to focus on. So, we're
4 very focused on the UCP.

5 The second thing that, as we talk about our
6 culture -- and I want to publicly give Commissioner
7 Nolan a significant amount of credit. He and I
8 were actually at a meeting two years ago, maybe
9 even three now as we began to look at PREA, and we
10 were talking about the environment and culture.
11 And it was Commissioner Nolan who said, don't
12 forget about the offender culture.

13 In Texas we have had a process and a
14 partnership with the Houston Foundation of Aids for
15 some years and it's an offender peer education
16 program that they come in and teach offenders about
17 how to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
18 It's an education training. We teach offenders to
19 train other offenders. It's been fairly successful
20 in our state.

21 After I was at the meeting with Commissioner
22 Nolan, I was back in Texas and actually at one of

1 our offender peer functions. And I spoke with a
2 couple of them and I asked them how they felt about
3 adding education about sexual assaults into the
4 peer education program. Both of them were
5 offenders who had been around for a long time in
6 the system and both of them were very positive
7 about that.

8 Part of our grant was facilitating the
9 development with the Houston Foundation of Aids.
10 And into expanding their curriculum, we have just
11 completed two pilots where we've added that into
12 the curriculum. They are assessing it right now
13 for any final changes and we anticipate by the end
14 of the year it will be fully implemented at all of
15 our facilities.

16 Now I believe, and those are just several
17 examples, those type of focuses into our
18 environment, into our culture, are the things that
19 can have the strongest impacts when we go back to
20 talk about staffing, when we talk about retention.
21 Our staff demand and must and need to work in a
22 safe environment. Those cultural and environment

1 issues are those things that can make them safe.

2 Our offenders must live in a safe environment.

3 Part of our discussion in Texas, as well as I
4
5 nation, is always recognizing that our mission in
6 criminal justice, when it is very easily captured
7 in two words, is public safety. Too often, though,
8 corrections and security officials define that very
9 quickly as a custody issue and a security issue.

10 Our discussion also recognizes that public
11 safety is very much an issue about the environment
12 that our offenders live. In Texas over 60,000
13 offenders are released every single year back into
14 our communities. We have an obligation and a
15 responsibility to have an environment where
16 positive change can occur. And when it doesn't,
17 when an offender leaves our facility angrier than
18 when they came in because of the environment, we
19 potentially failed our responsibility of public
20 safety. And that's the discussion we are having
21 with our wardens, our supervisors in our
22 facilities, all the way down to our sergeants and

1 our correctional officers. And I believe it's
2 through those kind of sharp focuses into our
3 environment and our culture is where we can have
4 the best impact in enhancing the professionalism of
5 our workforce, retaining our workforce and
6 recruiting people into the important business of
7 corrections.

8 Thank you.

10 Director.

11 Mr. Maupin?