

STATE of TEXAS
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES



SARAH DAVIS
DISTRICT 134
HARRIS COUNTY

July 18, 2017

Governor Greg Abbott,

As special session soon approaches, I contact you under tragic circumstances. As I am sure you have been briefed, another senseless and tragic murder has occurred in the city of Houston by a convict under the supervision of the state.

Houston resident Janeil Hooten Bernard was recently murdered in her home by a confirmed assailant named Michael Susberry. Records obtained from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice indicate that Susberry received a life sentence for aggravated robbery, and additional sentences for robbery and theft of an automobile. He was released on parole in June of 2004 and has remained under parole supervision since that time. While under supervision he was placed in an Intermediate Sanction Facility for technical violations of his supervision, and also convicted of a misdemeanor assault of a family member. The Parole Board conducted a hearing regarding that violation in May of 2016 and chose to continue supervision.

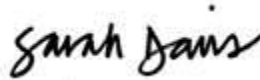
During the 85th Legislative Session I authored HB 2468 in response to the murder of Peter Mielke in my District by parolee Kiara Taylor. Results from subsequent review of both Taylor's parole history and the Board of Pardons and Paroles assessment methods were alarming: Taylor had committed multiple parole violations without having his parole revoked. Furthermore, there are 6,291 current parolees who have violated parole and 12,894 parolees with a warrant issued for their arrest. These harrowing statistics are a direct result of shortcomings in the assessment guidelines used by the Board in determining parole eligibility for inmates.

HB 2468 would have addressed these shortcomings by requiring the Board of Pardons and Paroles to analyze their guidelines through a study. In conducting the study, the Board would have obtained information about current and former inmates on parole regarding their violations.

These offenses would be classified by felonies, misdemeanors, and technical violations- vital data that is not being collected. After completion of the study, the Board would recommend necessary changes to the Legislature in order to increase accountability within the parole guidelines and enhance the safety of our communities.

Current assessment methods have proven ineffective at monitoring parolees and jeopardize the safety of the communities in which they reside. I therefore urge you to add the examination of assessment guidelines used by the Board of Pardons and Paroles to your Special Session agenda. The State of Texas owes victims, their families, and the general public the assurance that former criminals are being properly vetted prior to being granted parole, and that parole is revoked when parolees commit repeated offenses. HB 2468 is an important step in ensuring the state is doing this properly, and the results of this legislation will echo the Legislature's commitment to prioritizing the safety of all Texans.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Davis

CC:

House Corrections Committee:

Rep. James White, Chair

Rep. Alma Allen, Vice-Chair

Rep. Ramon Romero

Rep. Scott Sanford

Rep. Matt Schaefer

Rep. Tony Tinderholt

Jesse Ozuna, City of Houston

Andy Kahan, City of Houston

Robert Arnold, KPRC Houston