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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Bexar County Concerned for Welfare of Inmates Deemed Incompetent  
Calls on State to Provide Relief**

The State of Texas not only has a large budget surplus to direct where it is needed, but also budgeted for considerably more forensic mental health beds than they have staff for. This is what State Senator Jose Menendez learned in a session hosted by Bexar County Precinct 4 Commissioner Tommy Calvert and Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar at the county's adult detention center on Tuesday, August 1, 2023.

Senator Menendez heard that the Sheriff's Office currently has 240 inmates (as of 07/27/23) in their care, who are deemed mentally incompetent by a court. That means, even though they have not been tried or convicted of a crime, they are incarcerated, waiting for a transfer to a State of Texas mental health facility for competency restoration.

The Senator was informed that the average wait time for an inmate deemed incompetent to be transferred to the custody of the state is 512 days. Fourteen of them have been waiting for restorative care for three years. The shocking numbers were presented by the Bexar County Office of Criminal Justice Director Dr. Norma Greenfield-Laborde. She said, "We want them to get the help they need. It is an injustice to them."

The costs to Bexar County residents are tremendous with \$250 per day for each of these inmates. Yet, there are ripple effects that further exaggerate the issue. Inmates deemed incompetent require a higher level of supervision by detention deputies. Their housing at a detention facility versus mental health care facility can and often does exacerbate their condition(s), while creating a revolving door and inflating costs for the public health sector.

Senator Menendez stated, "This injustice is a result of years of abdicating the State's responsibility leaving unfunded wards of the State in county jails instead of State forensic beds. We must face our failures at all levels of government and must develop responsible and humane sustainable solutions." Sheriff Salazar was disappointed in the state's perceived lack of responsibility, stating,

“We absolutely have to do the right thing for our taxpayers and the mental health community. I’m excited to work with our stakeholders on these solutions.”

Bexar County leadership and State Senator Menendez called on the State of Texas Department of Health and Human Services to begin transferring these inmates into their care immediately or continue to engage with Bexar County officials to expeditiously seek alternative solutions to end the continued incarceration of people without hope for a continuation of their legal process.

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