

STATE OF TEXAS

RESOLUTION

of the

TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

In Support of Appropriations Request for Improving Indigent Defense

WHEREAS, the Texas Judicial Council is the policymaking body for the Texas Judicial Branch, created under Chapter 71, Texas Government Code; and

WHEREAS, the Council is charged with improving the administration of justice; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) is a permanent standing committee of the Texas Judicial Council, created under Chapter 79, Texas Government Code; and

WHEREAS, TIDC is charged with promoting compliance by counties with the requirements of state law related to indigent defense pursuant to the *Fair Defense Act of 2001*; and

WHEREAS, the right to counsel is guaranteed in the U.S. and Texas Constitutions; and

WHEREAS, numerous challenges remain in the Texas indigent defense system despite significant progress; and

WHEREAS, Texas is struggling with the loss of one-quarter of rural defense attorneys since 2015 that have left rural misdemeanor defendants without an attorney; and

WHEREAS, TIDC has successfully built regional defender offices as an effective solution to attract attorneys to rural areas and strengthen rural justice systems; and

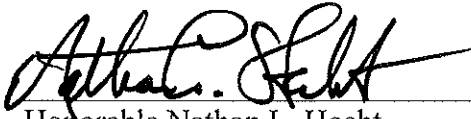
WHEREAS, demand for rural regional defender offices has greatly increased; and

WHEREAS, TIDC has fewer than 20 staff to oversee, fund, and improve indigent defense;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Judicial Council recommends the Texas Legislature:

1. Appropriate \$50 million in general revenue so TIDC can build rural defender offices in dozens of rural Texas communities; and
2. Allow for six additional TIDC employees to ensure compliance with state and

federal law.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan L. Hecht", written over a horizontal line.

Honorable Nathan L. Hecht
Chair, Texas Judicial Council