

Dear Governor Abbott,

I am writing to you out of deep concern for the inhumane conditions endured by men and women on Texas's death row. These conditions are not hidden, nor are they unavoidable. They are the direct result of policies that you allow to continue, and they amount to nothing less than state-sanctioned cruelty. People sentenced to death spend every single day of their incarceration in solitary confinement, locked in a 60-square-foot cell with almost no human contact. This is not justice; it is psychological torture, designed to break the mind and spirit long before an execution ever takes place.

The punishment goes far beyond isolation. Men and women are regularly denied commissary privileges, stripping them of access to basic necessities like soap and toothpaste, as well as simple comforts such as writing supplies or art materials that help them endure their confinement. When incidents happen in general population, death row prisoners — though uninvolved — are collectively punished with lockdowns lasting months at a time. During these lockdowns, they are given only “johnny sacks,” meager sack lunches that barely sustain them, and they are often denied showers for days or even weeks. These practices are degrading, unsafe, and create conditions that no human being should be forced to live under.

The brutal Texas heat makes survival even more dangerous. Year after year, incarcerated men report having no relief from extreme temperatures, leaving them to desperate measures such as soaking their shirts in toilet water just to keep from collapsing. This is not an exaggeration; it is a routine reality in your prisons, and it is one that could be solved through legislation like “85 to Stay Alive,” which would prevent facilities from exceeding 85 degrees. The refusal to act on such basic, life-saving measures reflects not justice or discipline, but disregard for human life. When people die because the state refuses to take action, their blood is on the hands of those who hold power to change it — and that includes you.

Even more disturbing is the way medical care is delayed, ignored, or outright denied until it is too late. Men and women have died on death row not because their sentences were carried out, but because treatable conditions were allowed to spiral into tragedies. This is preventable, it is unacceptable, and it is happening under your watch. The justice system is meant to protect life and dignity, not to watch people suffer until they are beyond saving. Every person, no matter their crime, is entitled to humane treatment, and Texas is failing at the most basic level of human responsibility.

Finally, it must be said: the death penalty in Texas is not just inhumane, it is racist and anti-poor. Too often, people of color are targeted, over-prosecuted, and sentenced to death in a system where bias is entrenched from the moment of arrest. Poor defendants, who cannot afford adequate legal representation, are railroaded into outcomes wealthier individuals would likely never face. This is not equal justice under the law. This is a system that punishes poverty and weaponizes race, and Texas has done nothing to change it. That is not justice, Governor Abbott — it is corruption, and it is wrong.

Every single one of these issues could be addressed if you had the will to act. Instead, lives are wasted, families are destroyed, and Texas continues down a path of cruelty rather than justice. You cannot hide behind excuses, because these problems are not accidents — they are choices made and upheld by your leadership. True leadership means having the courage to confront injustice, not profit from it. Governor

Abbott, history will remember whether you chose to continue this cruelty, or whether you finally chose to put humanity first.

Respectfully,