



**Justice Jane Bland, *Chair***  
**Supreme Court of Texas**

**Judge Barbara Hervey, *Chair***  
**Texas Court of Criminal Appeals**

**Kristi Taylor, *Executive Director***

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### ***JCMH Advances Mental Health in the 88th Texas Legislature***

The Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health focuses on the intersection of mental health and the justice system. Together with the Texas Judicial Council, the JCMH developed proposals and served as a resource for the 88th Texas Legislature. As a result of this work, Governor Abbott signed [SB 2479](#) into law. SB 2479 makes changes to:

- Permit licensed mental health professionals to apply electronically for emergency detention upon indication of a mental health crisis, to assist rural health care systems and others in providing better access to mental health evaluations and avoid unnecessary delays in treatment.
- Permit magistrates to refer for mental health evaluation of individuals who are charged with a Class C misdemeanor. This change to Code of Criminal Procedure 16.22 allows for early identification of individuals in mental health crisis charged with low-level offenses, with the hope of early intervention. The law already applies to more serious criminal offenses.
- Define the standard for a responsible handoff of an individual who is in a mental health crisis from a law enforcement officer to a healthcare facility, allowing officers to return to duty in their communities.
- Clarify that individuals charged with certain non-violent offenses are eligible for a mental health personal bond, subject to certain limitations.
- Permit blood draws as necessary to monitor court-ordered psychoactive medications.

“The JCMH is grateful to the 88th Legislature, Senator Zaffirini, the Texas Judicial Council, and the Office of Court Administration for their work toward early identification of those experiencing mental illness, with the hope of providing early access to treatment and services for those most in need when they encounter the justice system,” said JCMH Chair Justice Jane Bland.

Senator Judith Zaffirini sponsored [SB 2479](#). Representative Joe Moody and Texas Judicial Council Executive Director Megan LaVoie were also integral in the passage of SB 2479. The law takes effect September 1, 2023.



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### **About the Judicial Commission on Mental Health**

The Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH) was created by a joint order of the Supreme Court of Texas and the Court of Criminal Appeals of Texas. The mission of the JCMH is to empower the state courts through collaboration, education, and leadership to improve the lives of individuals with mental health needs, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders. For more information, see [www.texasjcmh.gov](http://www.texasjcmh.gov).