administrators, sheriffs, chiefs of police, you know. The people that are heads of the state wide systems, obviously, are very aware of the very issues, but there are over 3,000 jails in the United States that are county jails. And if you start talking about the city lock-ups and facilities, you could probably add another 15 to 20,000 facilities, and these people are not being reached.

I commend you for the actions that you have taken thus far and I look forward to continuing to work with you. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ms. Frasier. Mr. Dretke?

MR. DRETKE: Yes. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here with you today and to visit, Chairman and Commissioners.

I'm Doug Dretke, the director of the Correctional Institutions Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. And correctional institutions are all of our prison facilities within the TECJ.
My comments today as those before me are focused on the hiring, recruiting and retention of our correctional staff. Within the very difficult dynamics of our correctional environment, I first wanted to give you a little bit of the sense of the size. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice, we house over 151,000 offenders at 106 different facilities around the state of Texas. Ninety-four of them are state operated facilities. I am authorized 26,000 correctional officers with which today I have just under 24,000, meaning I have a shortage of over 2,000 correctional officers within the state of Texas within our facilities.

So, as I begin to talk about this, and the challenges of recruiting, hiring, retention, I wanted to begin with addressing our size. And we've heard this morning some discussion about recruiting and the screening process and all of those very, very important and critical processes. At the same time, things are very different for different jurisdictions.

I thought I would highlight one very
interesting thing that occurred in our system two years ago. We added a physical agility test to our hiring process, our recruiting, screening and hiring process that we felt was essential. We developed a physical agility test that was very particular to the things that a correctional officer may encounter in the performance of their duties.

We had such a significant drop in the number of applications not in our pass/fail because it was not that rigorous of a test, but just the fact that we began a physical agility test and we posted that in all of our advertisements with the Texas workforce and all the types of things we do to recruit, our application pool dropped so significant that we had to make a very, very quick decision to kill it and acquit it. Because we already were dealing with a substantial shortage, we could not handle a shortage driving or going that deep.

What we feel we learned, and I think that we must recognize, that much of our workforce finds
their way into our profession just looking for a job. I think we've heard it commented that not many of us raised our hands and said I'm off to college, I want to become a correctional officer. I am a little bit of an anomaly to that, but I was fairly alone in that choice. And what I think it does, it doesn't -- it sharpens our focus and particularly in some of the things that I'll talk about in Texas on as we hire staff that what our tremendous obligation and challenge is in training our staff and then in setting up all of the appropriate protocols and processes to ensure that they can be successful in working in a prison environment. And absolutely many of the men and women who find their way into our system to become correctional officers truly become outstanding professionals within our field.

Our salaries. We face a lot of the very same challenges that a lot of our counterparts and the sheriff mentioned, a number of them. Many of our facilities are in very rural areas. Our salaries, starting salary, is $22,000 at it's
highest point in after eight years. We have a number of steps that a correctional officer can go through. It reaches approximately 36,000. In our prisons that are in our Metropolitan areas, certainly that's not a very strong or competitive salary, as well as it's not strong enough to cause people to move into our rural areas from, maybe, Metropolitan areas. The other dynamic in Texas is that we have a very low unemployment rate today. When the construction industry, when the oil industry and things like that are strong, as they are in Texas today, that also has an impact on us with our applicant pool and even officers that work for us, some of them going back into the jobs or the professions that they came from when those industries weren't doing as well.

So as we focus then on those officers that we do hire, I think I want to begin by highlighting that the Prison Rape Elimination Act has had, I believe, a significant and a positive impact on sharpening our focus upon our culture and the
environment that our staff work within and our
offenders live within. And I feel a little bit
repetitive because I think every panel group that
you've had here today, as well as my peers here
today, we all very quickly move our comments into
the environment and the culture of our facilities.

In Texas, very similar to Ohio, and I am not
shy about saying many of the good things that we
have done, we have stolen from the wonderful state
of Ohio. We have developed a safe prison program
that has, again, many of the very same components
as Direct Wilkinson talked about.

The safe prison program is a vehicle to cause
positive change in our prison environment. It's a
comprehensive approach to prevent offender on
offender sexual assaults, physical assaults and
extortion. It includes our safe prison plan, which
is a comprehensive set of policies and procedures
in providing guidance and preventing, detecting,
responding to and investigating sexual assault in
life endangerment claims and extortion.

We actually have a safe prison program group
of staff who work in our headquarters centrally who
have the responsibility of program oversight and
implementation throughout our state, our state
facilities. And we have, on a number of our
facilities, full time units, say prison program
coordinators, and at our smaller facilities we have
staff that serve that same function, but they serve
in a collateral function.

Our comprehensive approach to truly impact our
environment, though, begins with our training. So
right at our preservice training, our safe prison
programs, beginning to talk about sexual assault,
we, like probably most jurisdictions, have used the
National Institute of Corrections' training tapes
that have been put together that provide oversight
and insight into the dynamics of sexual assault.

We have a significant focus on our Safe Prison
Program, immediately in our preservice I think the
sheriff very accurately talked about then when you
begin the training, you must continue the training.
It's also a component in our inservice training.
And probably very significantly we recognize the
impact of the supervisors, especially our first
line and our mid-level supervisors.

An approach to deal with all the dynamics of
sexual assaults absolutely starts with the top
down. Often, though, in communicating all the way
down in our paramilitary organizations, you can
often hit stumbling blocks as you go down through
your mid-levels ranks down to your first line
supervisor.

I think we heard, and I can't remember if it
was one of the Commissioner's comments or the one
of the panelist, who talked about our officers come
out of training schools pumped, ready to go, on
focus, on sharpen, and they get into prisons and
the dynamic can often be from a ten-year
correctional officer or even a staff member or a
supervisor, forget everything you learned. Now
we'll teach you the real world. Dynamic that we
want to hit head on.

And last year, we began our very first
sergeant academy. I'm not proud to say that for
many years when we promoted our first sergeant from
a correctional officer, we had a little penning
ceremony up in the front office, put chevrons on
their shoulders and told them to go to work and
expected that they all of a sudden knew what to do.

Well, we started last year where we bring in
every brand new sergeant before they can assume
their duties, and they go through a 12-day very
aggressive, very intensive, academy in which it
focuses on leadership, focuses on policy, but,
again, our Safe Prison Program is a significant
piece of that. And I am very excited about what
our sergeant academy will do for our system over
time.

And then we've implemented it into our
mid-level leadership program, which is focused on
our captains all the way up to our wardens. So we
attempted to very strongly place all the focuses
that PREA demands in place throughout our training
from top to bottom.

We, along with many jurisdictions, were also
able to receive a grant through PREA and very
comprehensive focus that we outline what we use it
for. But there are two particular strategies that I want to highlight that we have used the grant to help us develop. The first is developing an assessment tool based off the model of the institutional character profile that the Federal Bureau of Prison uses. They refer to it as an ICP.

We went through a number of meetings with the Federal Bureau of Prison. We learned about their process. We were able to acquire an NIC grant to go and actually observe it. And then we adapted it to our state and our system and we call it the UCP, the Unit Cultural Profile.

It is a tool that actually includes in its assessment actual interviews with staff and with offenders about safety, what are their safety concerns, do they have safety concerns on the facility, staff morale issues, communication, shortcomings and so forth. And what we are attempting to utilize this tool for is to first provide the warden with insight, what's happening on their facility, what are some of the focuses they need. From a systems perspective, it will
help us develop further training models, further
oversight models and further accountability models
that we need to continue to focus on. So, we're
very focused on the UCP.

The second thing that, as we talk about our
culture -- and I want to publicly give Commissioner
Nolan a significant amount of credit. He and I
were actually at a meeting two years ago, maybe
even three now as we began to look at PREA, and we
were talking about the environment and culture.
And it was Commissioner Nolan who said, don't
forget about the offender culture.

In Texas we have had a process and a
partnership with the Houston Foundation of Aids for
some years and it's an offender peer education
program that they come in and teach offenders about
how to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
It's an education training. We teach offenders to
train other offenders. It's been fairly successful
in our state.

After I was at the meeting with Commissioner
Nolan, I was back in Texas and actually at one of
our offender peer functions. And I spoke with a couple of them and I asked them how they felt about adding education about sexual assaults into the peer education program. Both of them were offenders who had been around for a long time in the system and both of them were very positive about that.

Part of our grant was facilitating the development with the Houston Foundation of Aids. And into expanding their curriculum, we have just completed two pilots where we've added that into the curriculum. They are assessing it right now for any final changes and we anticipate by the end of the year it will be fully implemented at all of our facilities.

Now I believe, and those are just several examples, those type of focuses into our environment, into our culture, are the things that can have the strongest impacts when we go back to talk about staffing, when we talk about retention. Our staff demand and must and need to work in a safe environment. Those cultural and environment
issues are those things that can make them safe. Our offenders must live in a safe environment.

Part of our discussion in Texas, as well as in nation, is always recognizing that our mission in criminal justice, when it is very easily captured in two words, is public safety. Too often, though, corrections and security officials define that very quickly as a custody issue and a security issue.

Our discussion also recognizes that public safety is very much an issue about the environment that our offenders live. In Texas over 60,000 offenders are released every single year back into our communities. We have an obligation and a responsibility to have an environment where positive change can occur. And when it doesn't, when an offender leaves our facility angrier than when they came in because of the environment, we potentially failed our responsibility of public safety. And that's the discussion we are having with our wardens, our supervisors in our facilities, all the way down to our sergeants and
our correctional officers. And I believe it's through those kind of sharp focuses into our environment and our culture is where we can have the best impact in enhancing the professionalism of our workforce, retaining our workforce and recruiting people into the important business of corrections.

Thank you.

Director.

Mr. Maupin?