

December 8, 2015

James D. Bethke  
Executive Director  
Texas Indigent Defense Commission  
209 W. 14<sup>th</sup> St, Room 202  
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mr. Bethke:

We send this letter to express our interest in Hidalgo County's participation in the Regional Public Defender Office for Capital Cases (RPDO). We understand the legislature allocated \$500,000.00 over the FY16/17 biennium to partially fund a capital public defender program in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. We further understand that Cameron County has elected not to participate in the program. After consideration of the RPDO proposal to open a satellite office to provide representation to indigent defendants charged with capital murder, Hidalgo County is contemplating a partnership with Lubbock County to open an office in our jurisdiction and establish the terms of the services to be provided by the RPDO.

We understand implementation of the RPDO program in Hidalgo County will affect our district courts. District Judges in Hidalgo County have met with the Chief Defender of the RPDO, Mr. Jack Stoffregen, and have agreed to participate in the program. The district judges will appoint the RPDO to represent indigent defendants in capital murder cases according to the procedures and caseload limits established for the office in an inter-local agreement.

Funding at this time, however, is an area of concern. It is our understanding that approximately \$400,000.00 of local funding would be needed annually to allow Hidalgo County to establish this new office. Unfortunately, our current financial situation makes it challenging to identify that funding within our 2016 Budget. Thus, we would greatly appreciate it if you could guide us with information about any funding or grant opportunities that could assist us with this cost.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to new partnerships with the Texas Indigent Defense Commission and Lubbock County that will result in effective representation for capital murder charged defendants in Hidalgo County.

Sincerely,

Ramon Garcia  
Hidalgo County Judge

Roberto "Bobby" Flores  
Presiding Judge, 139<sup>th</sup> District Court  
Local Administrative District Judge, Hidalgo County