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### **“Breaking Out of the Cycle of Neglect and Punishment”: Sen. Eckhardt Votes for Republican Bill Encouraging Creation of Crisis Centers for Homeless Individuals with Mental Health Risks**

**AUSTIN** – Last week, the Texas Senate passed **Senator Tan Parker’s SB 2847**, which strengthens Texas’ mental health infrastructure by enabling local governments to create 24/7 crisis centers to serve people experiencing homelessness in their communities. **Senator Eckhardt voted for the bipartisan Legislation that now advances to the House.**

According to the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, **homeless individuals are 11 times more likely to suffer from mental health issues.** But with scarce mental health resources homeless individuals are more likely to cycle in and out of local jails to meet their needs. **Senator Parker’s bill seeks to disrupt this cycle by empowering law enforcement to choose alternatives to arrest** so that individuals experiencing homelessness are steered onto a path of compassion and recovery.

**“Too often, legislation seeks to punish those experiencing homelessness rather than doing the hard work to address causes and build solutions. But Sen. Parker is doing the hard work,” said Senator Eckhardt.** “Senator Parker did the hard work of engaging stakeholders - local governments, nonprofit partners, the faith community - to understand this issue from the ground up. **The result is a thoughtful, comprehensive strategy for addressing this ongoing challenge in our communities** that doesn’t succumb to the temptation to punish those who need a hand up.”

**Senator Eckhardt continued: “This bill empowers our communities to come up with innovative solutions on this urgent issue.** I look forward to returning next Session to build on this progress and fund these initiatives and more across our state for our homeless neighbors.”

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*Sarah Eckhardt is the third-term Democratic State Senator representing District 14, comprising Austin and surrounding areas. She serves on the Administration, Border Security, Nominations, and Veterans Affairs committees in the 89th Legislative Session, and has previously served on the Water, Agriculture, & Rural Affairs and Local Government committees. A proud UT Law and Public Affairs alum, Senator Eckhardt was the first woman to serve as Travis County Judge from 2014-2020.*