



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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March 9, 2022

Harris County Bail Bond Board
1200 Baker Street
Houston, Texas 77002

RE: Adoption of 10% Premium on Bail Bonds in Harris County

The City of Houston, like most major cities across the country, has experienced an increase in crime. There are no easy answers nor a singular initiative standing by itself that adequately addresses this trend; rather, it requires a holistic and comprehensive strategy.

On February 2, 2022, I introduced the *One Safe Houston* initiative to combat the uptick of violent crimes across our city. As part of the plan, I outlined several efforts that require collaboration with stakeholders, community and faith-based leaders, businesses, and law enforcement agencies across the region.

The criminal justice system plays a critical role in upholding public safety. We must acknowledge when inefficiencies of that system threaten public safety here in Harris County. The *One Safe Houston* initiative identifies actions under the Bond Company Protocols and Best Practices section that address an alarming practice of bail bond companies. Bail bonding companies are in some instances now requiring substantially less than the customary 10 percent required to post bond.

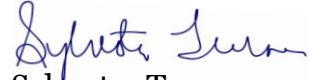
I have instructed the City Legal Department to draft an ordinance for consideration by the Houston City Council which would require that a bail bond company charge a premium which is equal to at least ten percent of the amount of the bail bond set by the court. This would require that the cost of a bail bond be equal to what the public generally believes to be the cost of such a bond rather than some lesser amount.

Today, I strongly support the adoption of regulations by the Harris County Bail Bond Board requiring that all companies issuing bonds within Harris County charge a premium equal to at least ten percent of the amount of the bond. If the Bail Bond Board were to adopt such a standard for the entire county, then the City would consider it unnecessary to move forward with the passage of the proposed ordinance. Otherwise, the City must act.

It is understandable that many in our community are frightened and outraged by the increase in violent crimes and release of criminals on lower than 10% minimum bonds. Every Houstonian deserves to feel safe in our region. Again, I urge swift adoption of regulations requiring that all companies issuing bonds within Harris County charge a premium equal to at least ten percent of the amount of the bond.

I am confident that if we work collaboratively and expeditiously, Houston-Harris County region will reduce violence and return to a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sylvester Turner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S".

Sylvester Turner

Mayor